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J. H. LITTLE

HOUSE  
OF  
JAGATSETH

with  
INTRODUCTION

BY  
PROFESSOR N. K. SINHA

CALCUTTA HISTORICAL SOCIETY  
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## PREFACE

J. H. Little's *House of Jagat Seth* is one of the few historical undertakings on modern Bengal whose reprint has been, for long, a desideratum. The treatise appeared in the form of two serial articles contributed to Vols. XX and XXII of *Bengal Past & Present* more than forty-five years ago. Scholars engaged in advanced study of Bengal of the eighteenth century as well as teachers of modern Indian history are aware of the debt they owe to Little; but they felt unhappy that the work, indispensable though, was not easily available. The Calcutta Historical Society undertook to remove this long felt want and hence this publication.

It is a happy coincidence that the Editor of the text is the author of *Economic History of Bengal* in two volumes and his Introduction will greatly add to the value of the book.

The Society offers its grateful thanks to the Ministry of Education, Government of India, for their financial help towards the publication.

. Sri Gouranga Press Private Ltd., Calcutta whose association with the Society and its publications is long and intimate has placed the Society under obligation by undertaking to print the volume.

Shri Bijanbihari Goswami, M.A. of the Department of History, St. Paul's College, Calcutta deserves thanks for preparing the Index.

January 26, 1967



## INTRODUCTION

This compilation by late Mr. J. H. Little was published in *Bengal Past and Present* 1920-21. He collected his materials mainly from India Office records, *Siya-ul-Mutakkerin*, *Riyaz-us-Salatin*, Jagat Seth family papers, Scrafton's *Reflections*, Vansittart's *Narrative*, Wilson's *Annals*, and dependable secondary sources. He has also recorded some traditions cherished by the Jagat Seth family. This history extends from 1717 to 1767 with a prologue and an epilogue. Though the compilation is in the form of family history the compiler gives a fairly detailed account of the momentous changes that took place in Bengal during these fifty years with special reference to the relations of the Jagat Seth family with the English East India Company.

Money has always been a power in human affairs. This is the history of a financial dynasty and its money power. The Jagat Seth house was to the Bengal Nawabs what the Fuggers of Augsburg were to Emperor Charles V of Germany and the Medicis of Florence were to the Papacy in the Middle Ages. But the comparison with the Medicis is perhaps unfair. There is nothing for the cultural historian in this family history.

Marwari bankers and traders became conspicuous in the economic life of India in the eighteenth century. It is a curious fact that this period of anarchy in the history of India coincided with their emergence. A wealthy "Indian banker and merchant "Marwari Bara" became very prominent in Astrakan about the same time that the Jagat Seths came into prominence in the financial life of eastern India". (*Indo-Russian Relations in the 17th and 18th centuries* by K. A. Antonova—XXVI International Congress of Orientalists). From Astrakan to Dacca finance and commerce came to be dominated by the Marwaris in the first half of the eighteenth century.

During the Mughal period Marwar enjoyed considerable trade. Its chief mart Pali was the connecting link between the west Indian sea coast and northern India. "Pali was the

entrepot for the eastern and western regions where the productions of India, Kashmir and China (Tibet?) were interchanged for those of Europe, Africa, Persia and Arabia. Caravans (Kitars) from the ports of Cutch and Gujarat imported elephant's teeth, copper, dates, gum-arabic, borax, coco-nuts, broad cloths, silks, sandalwood, camphor, dyes, drugs, oxide, sulphate of arsenic, spices, coffee etc. In exchange they received chintzes, dried fruits, Jira (assafoetida from Multan), sugar, opium (from Kota and Malwa), silks and fine cloths, potash, shawls, dyed blankets, arms and salt of home manufacture" (*Tod-Annals and Antiquities of Rajasthan*—Vol. II —Marwar). Thus the sons of Marwar learned how to earn money by trade. Of this knowledge they made very good use in the eighteenth century. The aridity of the native soil was an inducement to adventure abroad.

Banking business in Bengal was not in the hands of the Bengalis. This state of things can be explained historically. Vallal Sen, who ruled in Bengal during the years 1158—1179, gave new ranks to different castes. It is said that the Suvarnabaniks, the bankers of Bengal, did not advance him money when he needed it. He took his revenge by giving them a low rank in a new caste hierarchy. The Hindu propensity to social sub-divisions made much of it. The Suvarnabaniks or bankers naturally resented this slight. The evil influence of this ranking list explains to a large extent how bankers from other parts of India, who did not care for this local caste ranking, could easily establish themselves in Bengal ever afterwards.

Hiranand Saho came from Nagar in Marwar to Patna in 1652. At Patna he set up a *Kothee* or banking establishment which began to lend money to the servants of the English East India Company for the purchase of saltpetre. Thus this banking family came into business contact with the British when they were yet obscure traders and the family was also quite obscure. Manik Chand, the eldest of his seven sons, migrated to Dacca in search of his fortune about the end of the seventeenth century. Dacca was then the capital of Mughal Bengal and the most important centre of river-borne trade in eastern India. Trade transactions in this inland port must have amount-

ed to more than ten millions a year. The English East India Company's men were purchasing the products of Bengal's looms. The Dutch purchased 'lywaten' or cotton piece-goods for sale in South East Asia and in Europe. The French were also there competing with the Dutch and the English. The Armenian and Gujrati merchants and other Indian and non-Indian merchants were no less conspicuous. Bankers with their timely supply of credit did excellent business in this very competitive market. Manik Chand's *Kothee* began to prosper.

When Murshid Quli Khan, who was the supreme head of financial administration in the province, transferred his headquarters to Makhsudabad, Manik Chand, who was a favourite of the Diwan, accompanied him to the new centre of administration. Murshid Quli Khan became Deputy Subahdar and then Subahdar of Bengal. The Subahdari establishment was also removed from Dacca to Makhsudabad, named Murshidabad with the emperor's permission. This city now became the capital of the province. But a naib Subahdari establishment was maintained in Dacca. Dacca remained a mint town of the Mughal empire. It was still a very important trade mart. Manik Chand's *Kothee* at Dacca continued to do brisk business. It continued as one of the most important branches of the house. He had also a banking establishment of his own at Patna. There were branches at Hughli, Calcutta, Benares and other places in northern India. We do not know exactly when the house established its pre-eminent position in Delhi. Fateh Chand, successor of Manik Chand, got the title of Jagat Seth as a hereditary distinction in 1722. Long before this the house must have established its ascendancy in the money market at the Mughal capital. After Manik Chand's death in 1714, Fateh Chand, his nephew, succeeded him. In 1717, Raghunandan, Murshid Quli Khan's Daroga of the mint, died. Fateh Chand was placed in charge of the Nawab's mint at Murshidabad. He has been described in Dutch records as the "greatest money-changer of Hindustan". His name appeared so often in the books of the Dutch Company that the Directors in Holland were in doubt as to whether he was a person or an institution. From Dutch records we learn that the Jagat Seth *Kothee* at Chinsura was styled Fateh Chand Anandachandji. Anandachand was



Fatehchand's son who predeceased him. Fateh Chand had another son Dyachand who also died before him. The Central Office at Murshidabad was styled Manikchandji Anandchandji. The Dacca *Kothee* was styled Seth Manik Chand Jagat Seth Fateh Chandji. At Patna their *Kothee* had another name Manik Chandji Dyachandji. The Dutch wrote that it was the habit of these Indian bankers like the European bankers to preserve the names of departed bankers of great credit. From Dutch records we also learn that all money-changers in Bengal and many in Bihar, who were not connected with them, became bankrupt or were brought to bankruptcy. The monopolising tendency of finance capital operated. The premium charged by the shroffs on different varieties of coins in Bengal and Bihar depended upon the rates approved by the Jagat Seth house. (Dutch Archives—*Trade letter dated 14th February 1755, my microfilm copy roll I*).

Fateh Chand could provide the Nawab's government from time to time with enormous sums of money and by this means, as the Dutch put it, he could induce the government to take such measures and pass such regulations for the rate of money exchange as would favour the house. All the efforts of the English and the Dutch by means of presents to the under-officers and leading amirs to obtain the use of the mint failed. The Calcutta Council was informed "While Fateh Chand is so great with the Nabab, they can have no hopes of that grant, he alone having the sole use of the mint, nor dare any other shroff buy or coin a rupee's worth of silver" (Wilson—*Annals* III p. 369). But the Nawab was within his legal rights because the Farrukh Siyar farman which gave the English East India Company the privilege of coining their silver in the Nawab's mint was to be effective only if it suited the convenience of the local government. The *Hasb-ul-hukum* or Imperial rescript has been thus translated: "The Bengal government should afford facilities for the coining of the Company's gold and silver in the mint at Murshidabad in the season of coining other merchants' money if it was not against the King's interest." (S. Bhattacharya—*The East India Company and the Economy of Bengal*—Appendix): The Nawab was thus given the option of interpreting whether this order could be given effect to. Murshid Quli,

Shujauddin and Alivardi agreed with Jagat Seth Fateh Chand and after him with Jagat Seth Mahtab Rai that this privilege could not be extended to the British. It was against the interest of the realm. The Farrukh Siyar farman contained another clause—"The Madras rupees, provided they were as good as those coined at Surat, should pass in Bengal without discount." But no government, however well inclined it might be, could determine the discount rate of different varieties of coins. Warren Hastings and Cornwallis failed in a similar attempt in the seventies and eighties of the eighteenth century. The Nawab's government could not have given effect to this recommendation even if it had tried. The English and the Dutch complained about the "unsuppleness" of the government. They regarded this as an indication of the ascendancy of the house of Jagat Seth.

The batta on re-coinage was a source of considerable profit to the house. The charge of stamping the rupees afresh was reasonable and the profit which the house derived after meeting the government demand was very considerable. Even as late as 1837-38 the East India Company's mint receipts from re-coinage was Rs. 502,745. In 1838-39 this amounted to Rs. 575,409 (*Letter from Government of India to the Court of Directors*—Finance Dept. 24 June, 1846). In the eighteenth century there were so many different varieties of coins in Bengal to be exchanged into siccas. But there was no currency anarchy because the Jagat Seth house could control the operations of the shroffs. The house remained the sole purchaser of all the bullion imported to Bengal.

The house of Jagat Seth received land revenue payments made by zamindars and amils (collectors). Other government collections were also received in its houses of business. To this house was also entrusted the task of remitting the annual tribute to Delhi. Between 1728 and 1740 this was partly paid by drafts on their *Kothee* at Delhi. This house therefore functioned in Bengal as the state bank. In the words of the people at the Nawab's Darbar "Fateh Chand's estate was deemed as the king's treasure."

The business connection of the house with the English in Bengal began in 1706 under Manik Chand. Between 1718 and

1730 the English took from the Murshidabad *Kothee* of the house of Jagat Seth loans amounting on an average to four lakhs a year. Their Dacca, Calcutta and Patna establishments must have taken similar loans from nearby Jagat Seth *Kothees*, whenever necessary. The case of Kantu, which is discussed at some length by the compiler, shows the complicated nature of this connection. The private trade of the Company's servants was mixed up with the public trade of the Company. But officially the Company's servants were not prepared to admit it at the darbar. This tangle created contentions between the Calcutta Council and Fateh Chand on two occasions, once in 1730 and again in 1743. The Fateh Chand-Kantu affair in 1730 showed how inexorable Fateh Chand could be in money matters. The Company was to pay, according to his contention, the sum of Rs. 2,45,000. The Calcutta Council argued that part of it was due from the Company's servants and the Company was not responsible for it. He appeared, after prolonged negotiations, to yield but when the Company again needed his services at the darbar he succeeded in securing what he considered to be his rightful demand. As all English trade was represented at the darbar as the Company's trade in order to secure immunity from search and customs charges the Jagat Seth house was not prepared to differentiate between two categories of debts, one incurred in private trade and the other in public trade. The Calcutta Council became convinced that if they were to trade in Bengal "Futteh Chand must be satisfied." The lesson was driven home that "the house must be kept in temper."

The house of Jagat Seth was the centre of commercial credit in eastern India. It regulated the rates of exchange, superseded the necessity for the transfer of bullion and afforded a permanent supply of capital at all times. It was safe, judicious, large-scale banking, not guided by any speculative spirit. Its vast capital was steadily and beneficially employed in augmenting trade. There was a system of mutual accommodation between government and the bank which is perhaps contrary to the principles of banking but in the existing circumstances this was inevitable.

J. H. Little is concerned almost exclusively with the relations of the house with the English East India Company. The

Dutch, the French and the country traders are almost ignored. There were so many rivals for the purchase of the products of Bengal's looms, Bengal's raw silk, saltpetre and other commodities that timely supply of credit was very necessary. This suited Jagat Seth's policy of short term commercial credit. In 1757 the Dutch borrowed 4 lakhs at 9 p.c. and the French debt to the Jagat Seth house amounted to a million and a half at the time of the capture of Chandernagore. The trade of Dacca, Calcutta, Hughli, Chandernagore, trade, inland and foreign, depended very much on this timely supply of credit. In a highly competitive market their reasonable credit terms and constant supply of capital were of great help to merchants of all categories. The house was almost punctilious on its part in the observance of its engagements.

There was a single composite money market in eastern India with the Jagat Seth house in control. Its credit was great in Delhi, in all important business centres in western India and in all important centres of overland trade outside India. Turani merchants from Central Asia, Armenian merchants trading with Basra, Mocha, Jeddah, depended on this house as much as merchants from Upper India, English and French private traders and English, French and Dutch East India Companies. Trade in cotton piece goods, raw silk, silk piece goods and saltpetre in which Bengal specialised during these years had a world market extending from South-East Asia to the Khanates of Khiva and Bokhara, from the Persian Gulf to Astrakan and even beyond as far as Moscow. This volume of overland trade is not quantifiable in the existing state of our knowledge. The Indian merchants from Punjab and Sind, Muslims, Marwaris and Sikhs, who traded in different parts of the Russian empire, had some sort of connection, however remote, with the Jagat Seths at Murshidabad. We would not be wrong if we presume that the merchants whose names are mentioned in Russian records of the period—Matu, Balaram, Sukhanand, Chantu, Kasiram, Magandas and Indo-Tartar merchants in Russian territories and in Central Asian Khanates, were ready to accept hundis given by the Jagat Seth house (*Indo-Russian Trade Relations in the XVIII century*, Ed. by K. Antonova). The assassination of Nadir Shah in 1747 and subsequent disturbances in

Persia dislocated this brisk traffic. But when the Afghan invader Ahmad Shah entered Delhi in 1757, he could not disregard the money power of this house. When he held his court in the Diwan-i-am the most honoured man in his darbar was the representative of the house of Jagat Seth because he alone could stand as security for the amirs from whom the invader wanted to extort money (Nuruddin Hasan—*Life of Najib-ud-daula* translated by J. N. Sarkar, *Indian Historical Quarterly* 1933). This house thus not only eased the operations of commerce; it was prepared to meet extraordinary monetary demands during recurring political crises. Murshidabad was for fifty years the centre of gravity of commercial credit and the principal loan market of northern India.

Political influence was a consequence of huge finance capital. The house enjoyed great prestige and exerted very considerable influence on the Mughal Court during the period 1717 to 1767. It has been said that it was at the intercession of Fateh Chand that Murshid Quli Khan, who had incurred the Mughal emperor's displeasure, was restored to his trust and favour in 1722. But Fateh Chand did not exert his influence at Delhi to obtain an Imperial farman for Sarfaraz, Murshid Quli's grandson, though he had every reason to be grateful to Murshid Quli for all the favours he had enjoyed. Fateh Chand did not perhaps directly take any part in the intrigues which helped Shuja-ud-din (not Shuja-ud-daula as J. H. Little describes him) to succeed Murshid Quli in 1727. But Fateh Chand's support must have stood him in good stead and facilitated his moves in Delhi. Shuja-ud-din was therefore even more generous than Murshid Quli in his favours to Fateh Chand. Fateh Chand's support of Alivardi's cause was cautious but not open. He was one of the prime movers of the Revolution of 1740. After the defeat and death of Sarfaraz Fateh Chand helped Alivardi in getting the farman of Subahdarship from the Mughal emperor. Siraj-ud-daula could not for some time get Imperial confirmation and he suspected that the Seths were using their influence against him. He took Mahtab Rai and Swarup Chand to task for this delay. The role of Mahatab Rai and Swarup Chand in the intrigues that culminated in the battle of Plassey is very clear. They first supported Yar

Latif Khan (Luttee) and then persuaded him to throw in his lot with Mir Jafar. Jean Law wrote, "The path which led to the battle of Plassey had its beginning in Murshidabad and not in Calcutta and it was the Seths who placed the feet of the English in the path." He wrote further, "The Seths encouraged the Nawab in a false impression about this (Chandernagore) affair. . . . they managed so well that they undid in the evening all that I had done in the morning."

Fateh Chand engineered the revolution of 1740. Mahatab Rai and Swarup Chand followed in his footsteps in 1757. But history did not repeat itself in the same style. Alivardi had depended on his own armed strength and on treachery in the ranks of Sarfaraz. Mir Jafar depended entirely on the armed strength of the British. His only contribution to victory at Plassey was his treachery. He sank into the position of 'Clive's Jack-ass'. The revolution of 1740 placed Fateh Chand at the height of his fortune. The revolution of 1757 marked the rapid decline of the Jagat Seth house.

These semi-regal bankers of Murshidabad, omnipotent in Bengal and powerful in Delhi, never demanded money of the English as the price of their many services at the Nawab's darbar. According to J. H. Little, "The Seths were not tainted with the greed of Omichand or the treachery of others." The charge of treachery to Sarfaraz and Siraj-ud-daula cannot be denied though they might have good reasons for bringing about the revolutions of 1740 and 1757. They did not certainly have anything to do with the plunder of the Murshidabad treasury after the battle of Plassey by Clive, Watts, Scrafton, Nobkissen, Ramchand and others. It was estimated that the Nawab's treasury contained about 40 crores—possibly an exaggeration. On the basis of this calculation Omichand's share of 5 p.c. was to have amounted to 20 lakhs. Omichand, we all know, was duped. But the treasury, outer and inner, was thoroughly looted. The Jagat Seths must have been opposed to looting of any treasury from an instinct of self-preservation. In this case they did not certainly intend their nominee, the new Nawab, to start with this handicap of an empty treasury. They must have been powerless to prevent this plunder. Accor-

ding to *Siyar-ul-Mutakkerin* they had offered the British three crores of rupees as the cost of this expedition against Siraj-ud-daula. This rumour was undoubtedly a popular exaggeration. But it is not unlikely that they might have offered to pay for the expenses of the expedition. The Jagat Seths were Nawab-makers in 1740 and 1757, the Calcutta Council made and unmade Nawabs in 1760, 1763 and 1765. The motto of the members of the Calcutta Council, avid for plunder, was "How many lakhs shall I put in my pocket."

Jagat Seth Mahtab Rai and Maharaja Swarup Chand were victims of the revolution which they had brought about. This has happened so often in history. The rapid decline of this house began after Plassey. Mir Qasim was "the Satan who buffeted them." He seized them, brought them to Munghyr, killed them at Barr in Bihar and took some of the members of the family with him in his exile as captives to be ransomed later. But the revolution of 1757 created those conditions that would have brought about this rapid decline even without any violence. The loot of Plassey, subsequent acquisition of lakhs by the servants of the Company as presents, perquisites and profits of privileged private inland trade, created new conditions over which the Jagat Seth house had no control. It was not necessary for the servants of the Company to borrow money any longer for their private trade. Their privileged private trade, facilitated by political control, deterred merchants from other parts of India from coming to Bengal in large numbers because they felt that in Bengal the British trader was supreme. The Company's official trade—Investment—was no longer dependent upon short term credit from the Seths. The Company had now sufficient surplus in its treasury except in times of war. The Dutch, the French (after 1763) and the Danes no longer depended upon the financial support of the Seths. The servants of the Company put their money into the treasury of the Dutch, French and Danish East India Companies for transmission to Europe by bills of exchange. "There was a great deal of capital without any certificate of birth. According to one of the lists laid before Parliament the Company and its employees from 1757 to 1766 got £ 6,000,000 from the Indians as gifts." (Marx—*Capital*—Vol. I Ed. Dona Torr—

p. 777) The export trade of Bengal became altogether independent of Jagat Seth finance after Plassey.

They still controlled for some time the batta on coins in spite of the operation of the mint in Calcutta. Their trade in rupees was "a fund of infinite wealth to the family." Sicca rupees circulated for twelve months at their face value, then fell 3 per cent under the denomination *hirsuns*. After the second year they fell again by 2 p.c. and came to be known as sonauts. They continued to be so denominated until they were again brought into the mint and re coined as siccas. In different parts of Bengal different varieties of coins like French Arcot, Dutch Arcot, Madras Arcot, Waziri, Narayani etc. were current and the shroffs fixed their value in terms of sicca rupees. This very complicated business was controlled by the Jagat Seth house for more than five decades, and the principal shroffs were under their control. But these shroffs quickly took advantage of the misfortune that overtook the house and asserted their independence of central control. In the sixties there was a disordered currency and Jagat Seth Khushal Chand and Maharaja Udwat Chand could no longer check this disorder. The administration of the East India Company was equally helpless in the face of growing currency confusion. It was not able until about the nineties of the eighteenth century in bringing order out of chaos. The ascendancy of the Jagat Seth house was by then a dim and distant memory.

After the grant of Diwani to the English East India Company a board was set up. The members were Md. Reza Khan (Naib Diwan), Maharaja Durlabh Ram, Jagat Seth Khushal Chand and Maharaja Udwat Chand. The treasury had three different locks with three different keys. One of the keys was in possession of the Seths. The Jagat Seth house could not possibly like this arrangement. They lost their exclusive hold over the shroffing of revenues—examining, sorting and weighing of various kinds of rupees and settling the batta upon all in terms of sicca rupees. This was their shroffage on the *Kutchā amdāni* or gross payment. Bolts has shown (*Considerations* p. 159) that in Bihar the chief of the Patna Council's Diwan, in imitation of the Jagat Seths, took upon himself the



amount of payment from the zamindars, gave the government a *paat* or receipt for the amount and got from the zamindars an allowance of 10 p.c. *paatwan* (commission) upon the sum for the use of his credit. Thus the Seths were squeezed out from this avenue of wealth.

Their prestige had suffered so much by 1765 that Jagat Seth Khushal Chand and Maharaja Udwatchand, who were the two most potent private men in India, could be bullied by Johnstone, Senior, Leicester and Middleton of the Calcutta Council when they came to Murshidabad to settle succession after the death of Mir Jafar. The Councillors demanded, "If you want to have your business go freely on make us an acknowledgement" (Rs. 125,000). Such extortion by menaces from the Jagat Seth house was unthinkable even in 1760. In 1766 they laid a claim for 51 lakhs which they had paid to Mir Jafar. Clive would accept only 21 lakhs to be repaid in ten years half by the English and half by the Nawab. Clive charged them with avarice because they were pressing the zamindars to discharge their debts to their father while these zamindars were five months in arrears to the government. They could pay the ransom for the captive members of the family whom Mir Qasim had delivered into the hands of the mutsuddies of the Imperial court by pawning jewels and by borrowing. But when Khushal Chand was offered by Clive a pension of three lakhs a year he declined. At that time Khushal Chand was in the habit of spending a lakh a month. This unabated extravagance hastened the decline. We know that Mahtab Rai and Swarup Chand used to bring Dacca muslin valued at Rs. 150,000 a year for their household use in 1747. The Nawab's household took about Rs. 300,000 a year at that time (Abdul Karim—*Dacca the Mughal Capital*). It was absurd for Khushal Chand to imitate the profusion of his father and grandfather. At the time of the famine of 1770 he could donate only Rs. 5,000/- for famine relief, (Hunter—*Annals of Rural Bengal* App.) while Gopi Mondal, an obscure merchant of Dinagepore, could spend Rs. 50,000/- for relief of distress. (Buchanan—*Dinagepore Report*—Br. Mus. Add. 28973). The close association of the Jagat Seths with the Company ceased after the departure of Clive in 1767. When the seat of the government was transferred from Murshidabad to Calcutta the

house ceased to enjoy the prestige which association with the governing power could bring.

They gradually ceased to dominate the money market even in the field of indigenous banking. From 1717 to 1756 the tendency of this house was towards monopolistic banking in Bengal and Bihar. But there were now many rivals in the field. The estimate of Bolts was that in the early sixties the house had a capital of 7 krors—"as his countrymen calculate" (*Considerations* p. 158). In their heyday they must have owned at least 14 krors. The interest rate of the Jagat Seth house was normally 9 p.c. The house did not charge what has been described as oriental rates of interest. The Bank of England in those days charged 8 p.c. The house ensured a sound system of bank credit and brought indigenous banking to the greatest height to which it could possibly rise. The phenomenal rise was due to certain favourable circumstances which could not recur again. Ghulam Husain writes, "In Alivardi's time they lived in Bengal with so much credit and authority as is hardly credible at this distance of time. . . . their riches were so great that no such bankers were ever seen in Hindostan or Deccan . . . . nor was there any banker or merchant that could stand comparison with them all over India. Their wealth was such that there is no mentioning it without seeming to exaggerate and to deal in extravagant fables. Their sons, in consequence of the superiority acquired by the English in all branches of trade over Bengal and Hindostan, fall vastly short of the wealth of their fathers." (*Mutakkerin* II 458) Alexander Macrabie, brother-in-law of Philip Francis, wrote to a friend in America, "Perhaps even this generation may read of the trade and riches of India as they read of Soloman's cargo, gold of Ophir and ships of Tarshish" (*The Francis Letters* Ed. by Beata Francis and Eliz Keary vol. I, 20th Dec. 1744). Macrabie was writing this epitaph on the riches of India in the days of Jagat Seth Khushal Chand.

Circumstances became more and more unfavourable. Khushal Chand and Udwat Chand were unable to stem the rot. Their rivals, even in the limited field of indigenous banking, succeeded in outstripping them. Mir Qasim's attempt to set up the bank-

*ing house of Bolaki Das as a rival to the house of Jagat Seth had met with failure. But Gopal Das, Bhowany Das and Ballam Das set up a banking business at Benares when the rapid decline of the Jagat Seth house was about to begin. Gopal Das who had '8 annas share'—this was the Indian way of indicating half share—died in 1787. The firm which was styled Bhyaram Gopal Das in Benares and Monhar Das Dwaraka Das in Calcutta and Murshidabad—their joint venture worth about a krór of rupees—had its *kooties* at Nagpur, Cuttack, Bombay, Surat, Poona, Calcutta and Murshidabad. It became more important than the Jagat Seth house in the field of indigenous banking in northern India. Monhar Das, one of four sons of Gopal Das, died in 1818. His son Mukund lall inherited assets valued at 20 lakhs. Indigenous banking in eastern India was no longer dominated by one single house with an almost unlimited supply of finance capital. The Jagat Seth house had declined so far by the end of the eighteenth century that its banking became little more than small scale usury and hundi business.*

There was no longer a single composite money market. European banks had made their appearance—Bank of Hindustan in 1770, Bengal Bank in 1784, General Bank of India in 1786, Bank of Bengal in 1806. The Bank of Bengal received government support in 1809 and later became the Chief Presidency Bank. The Union Bank, a commercial bank, came into existence in 1829. All these banks failed with the exception of the Bank of Bengal. But they were trading on borrowed capital and indigenous banks did not receive deposits from their clients. Indigenous banking continued to deal mainly in the credit instruments of the Indian money market. European banking, inspite of its initial failure, added a new dimension to banking business.

Indigenous banking which emerged from the debris of the Jagat Seth house does not appear to have an inadequate cash nexus. But capital was scattered and there was stagnation. For a long time the European banks had no upcountry branches. Their foundation was also very shaky. After the decline of the Jagat Seths indigenous banking also degenerated into small scale business in money. "In every large town shroffs dealt in hundis

in much the same manner in which the bill broker of today buys and sells commercial paper. Indigenous banking business was largely restricted in issuing and discounting of hundis. There is no evidence that the shroffs and mahajans were prepared to receive deposits from their clients or the public at large. The hundi was the chief credit instrument in financing the movement and storage of agricultural produce". (*One hundred years of Banking in Asia and Africa*—G. Tyson p. 11). European commercial and financial enclave gradually became stronger and stronger particularly after the 1858 Act which enabled joint stock banking companies to be formed on the principle of limited liability. Indigenous banking was completely overshadowed.

The rapid decline of the house of Jagat Seth is best illustrated from the records of the Supreme Court. A case was instituted in the Supreme Court by Joykrishna Banerjee against Jagat Seth Indrachand and Seth Bishnu Chand, sons of Jagat Seth Harakh Chand. This was in connection with a transaction in their Dacca *Kothee* during the years 1814-1821. Joykrishna Banerjee had pecuniary dealings with the house of Jagat Seth at Dacca. He used to lend money to British private traders in Dacca. His own fund not being sufficient he sometimes borrowed money from the Jagat Seth *Kothee* there. His contention was that the *kothee* charged premium at a rate which was higher than what was agreed upon to be paid and the exchange on Calcutta was higher than what was claimed. He was, he said, kept confined in the Dacca *Kothee* of the Jagat Seth house and by threats compelled to subscribe to an agreement which showed an unjust balance against him. When the case came before the Supreme Court the Seths pleaded to the jurisdiction. The plaintiff replied, "Your orator cannot have adequate remedy and relief at law except in a court of equity."

Another case which refers to events occurring in 1822 reveals another stage in the declining fortune of the house. It was a case instituted by Jagat Seth Govind Chand of Murshidabad, son of Jagat Seth Indra Chand against Raja Haranath. His contention was that the defendant induced him to sell some

diamonds and jewels valued at Rs. 60,000 because he wanted to be resplendent in his gorgeous costume when he would see the Governor-General in his darbar. The defendant agreed to pay Rs. 40,000 and interest at the rate of 12 p.c. from September, 1822. The defendant's case was that he came to Calcutta for the purpose of defending a suit. Jagat Seth Indrachand was indebted to him for sicca rupees 100,000 besides interest. He demanded payment. Jewels were sent as part payment valued at Rs. 40,000. He was asked not to sell them in Calcutta at a lower price. The jewels were valued at Rs. 13,000. Indrachand was very ill at that time. Duniram Dubey, his manager, saw defendant and requested him not to press his claims. Jagat Seth Indrachand died a few days after. Duniram Dubey informed him that the house was not in a position to pay. Raja Haranath got a verdict for the full sum of Rs. 100,000 together with interest.

Was clannishness one of the defects of the house of Jagat Seth in the days of its glory as also in the days of its decline? Their employees and many of their agents belonged to the Oswal community of the Jains. But clannishness, assuming the charge to be true, could also have been a source of strength because of the closely knit character of the personnel. Duniram Dubey was their mooktear or manager at Murshidabad in 1822, Murlidhar Dubey at Dacca. Murlidhar was succeeded by Ramdial Tewari. His successor was Lala Dharanidhar. These names, however, indicate that the house did not confine its choice of officers to the Oswal community.

'The quick pulse of gain' was no longer there. The Jagat Seth house, with its enormous capital, separated the functions of the banker and trader, directed the energies, skill and means of the merchant more efficiently to purely commercial pursuits. In the closing years of the eighteenth century and the first third of the nineteenth century capital was scattered and bankers in most cases combined banking with trading. The European agency houses, in many cases, combined banking with overtrading. They collapsed during the years 1830-1833. The Jagat Seth house, even in their changed circumstances, could not think of trafficking in opium and indigo. But internal trade

was a very safe investment and large capitalistic enterprises could have been organised in the sphere of local trade. There were many petty shroffs, who were at the same time traders on a small scale operating from their headquarters at Burrabazar in Calcutta. Theirs was mean efficiency. Their small scale business never inspired confidence or respect. The Jagat Seth house, with its exalted tradition, was perhaps incapable of becoming inland traders. Moreover, as C. E. Trevelyan pointed out in 1834, "The profession of the merchant in the interior of the country is both unpleasant and disreputable on account of the complete state of dependence in which the most respectable people are placed on the meanest custom house officer by Secs. 19 and 23 of Reg. IX of 1810." Trevelyan added: "The mercantile character is held in low estimation. When respectable people in the provinces, who have capital lying idle on their hands and who probably complain of the difficulty of finding employment for it, are asked, why they do not engage in trade, almost invariably reply that they cannot supplicate every low peon on four rupees a month, who has the power of detaining their goods under pretence of searching them." (*Report on Inland Customs and Town Duty*). In 1836 internal customs barriers were removed as a consequence of Trevelyan Report. But the inland trader's mercantile character was held in such low estimation for about a quarter of a century that the Jagat Seths could not stoop so low. They also succumbed to the atmosphere of indolent contentment which prevailed in Bengal.

The most surprising feature of this decline was their growing litigiousness. They caught the contagion of this spirit, one of the vices which British justice undoubtedly fostered. Fortunately for this house the family was not prolific and very few of the Jagat Seths had more than one son and on more than one occasion the succession had to be continued by adoption. But we find that in 1822 Indrachand and Bishnuchand had disputes for the division of the inheritance which Bishnuchand brought before the Supreme Court. A partition suit was instituted by the younger brother against the elder for the division of their property in Burrabazar in Calcutta which was valued at Rs. 100,000 or thereabouts. No family dispute had

before been brought to law courts. A commission of partition was his issue. The banking community very rarely brought succession disputes to law courts. It was also the custom among the bankers to settle even their accounts among themselves by arbitration. What was now done by the younger Seth was exactly in the style in which joint family fortunes were dissipated in Bengal.

Two hundis are reproduced here as specimens to indicate the type and scale of Jagat Seth business in its days of decline.

1821

Juggat Seat Inderchunder

*vs.*

Joynarain Paul Choudhury

EXHIBIT C. Order for the amount to be received sent by Anundchundjee and Babu Gobindchundjee to Juggat Seat Khooshalchandjee and Babu Gobindchandjee at their own risk. To the Mansion of All Happiness—

Sri Casinath Doss—the present information is that the sum of sicca rupees 1500 has been received at Narayangange from Srijut Prem Ishwar Oomes Rutton Pall Choudhury and on the arrival of the order at Calcutta it is to be paid to Srijut the Holder. On the expiration of the fixed term of 21 days from this day you will pay sicca fifteen hundred rupees of market currency of that place in full and obtain a receipt.

Year 1225 date 19th Jaistha.

To the Mansion of all happiness.

Srijut Cossinath Poddar at the house of Sri Calisankar Ghose at Burrabazar in Calcutta.

Sri Sri Ganeshji Sahaya

∴ 74½ [It was a popular superstition that if any one except the addressee opened this letter he would incur the sin of killing so many persons that their sacred thread would weigh 74½ Mds.]

This is written to the worthy of respect Sri Panch Juggat Seth Khoosaulchandjee Baboo Govindchandjee at Calcutta from said Anundchandjee Baboo Govindchandjee at Dacca.

Respectable salutations, There is health and safety here. Yours is desired and wished for. You will learn the subject as follows—The sum of rupees 5,000 five thousand is paid here by Praim Issore Oomesh Rutton Paul Choudhury this day metee Choit Soodee Nowamee Sunday—eighteen days after this date you will pay to him the said sum in sicca rupees, current in the bazar as is used in hoondees. You will previous thereto make necessary inquiries and take a receipt in full on the back of the hoondees and you will carry the said amount to our debit. Sumbat 1876 Mittee Choit Soodee Sosthee Sunday.

This hoondie is sold by Sree Oomesh Rutton Paul Choudhury at Dacca and taken by Sri Raujkissore Baboo at Calcutta—payable to Sri Nettonaud Poddar.

Sri Nettonand Poddar

I have received in full amount  
of the hoondie 14th Bysack.

When Jagat Seth Gobindchand applied for a pension in 1844 and was granted Rs. 1,200/- a month the Court of Directors remarked that the decline of the family was as much due to mismanagement as to any unavoidable cause. The pension was “an acknowledgment of the former merits of the house towards the British Government.”

It was my privilege to see 8th Jagat Seth Fateh Chand, some time after partition and creation of Pakistan. He was then staying in his house at Mahimapur near Murshidabad. I could not help turning the conversation very discreetly towards finance. He referred to his difficulties in his land revenue collection from his zamindari in Jessore. This great banking family made Bengal its home and Bengal succeeded after several generations in turning the banker into a zamindar. Environment played its part in history.

N. K. SINHA.





COMPILED BY LATE MR. J. H. LITTLE, B.A.  
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## INTRODUCTION

“This was once a house of trade—a centre of busy interests.  
The throng of merchants was here—the quick pulse of gain.”

Lamb.

The visitor to Murshidabad, says the author of the best guide-book to its antiquities, is generally content with seeing the Palace ; the Jaffraganj cemetery, where the Nawabs of Bengal from the time of Mir Jafar lie buried ; the Katra Musjid, containing the tomb of Murshid Kuli Khan, the founder of Murshidabad ; the Great Gun which has gradually been raised from the ground by a peepul tree in the course of its growth, the Mobarik Manzil, where the East India Company once dispensed justice but which is now a garden house of the Nawab Bahadur of Murshidabad ; Moti Jheel, the Lake of Pearls ; and the Khosbagh cemetery, where Alivardi Khan and Siraj-ud-daula were buried. Some visitors, however, proceed northwards along the main road of Murshidabad to Jaffraganj where they are shown the house which was once the residence of Mir Jaffar and the place within its enclosure where, tradition asserts, Siraj-ud-daula met his death. If the visitor were to proceed a short distance farther he would notice on the left a dilapidated gateway. Four roads branch from this gateway like the sticks of a fan and it seems that all the frequenters of these roads are wending their way to this common point. When they reach it, however, they all pass by.

From the gateway a path leads down to the river Bhagirathi dividing into two parts a piece of land of considerable extent. For the most part this is covered with jungle but in a clearing there is a building in a tolerable state of repair. The front of the building is covered with porcelain tiles evidently of Dutch

manufacture, and, no doubt, the fruit of some forgotten bargain with the factors of the Dutch settlement at Cassimbazar. In a setting of canals and windmills we find on the tiles scenes from the Old and New Testaments. Cain is killing Abel ; Moses is on the Mount with the two tables of stone ; Rahab is letting the two spies down from the walls of Jericho ; David is leading his sheep to pasture ; the ravens bring food to Elijah ; the children mock Elijah ; Jezebel has been thrown from the window and the dogs are leaping at her throat ; we see the Baptism in the Jordan, the Woman at the Well of Samaria, the Prodigal Son taking his food from the trough and St. Peter denying his Master. With these scenes in our minds we look inside the building and our eyes fall on a *rath* or car, on which the idols are carried on the day of Jagannath and in the innermost shrine a priest is worshipping the god to whom the building has been dedicated ; for this is a temple of Vishnu.

A Hindu temple adorned with stories from the Bible is not the only contrast presented to the mind in this place. Close by is a small reservoir in the middle of which a fountain once played. This and the mound surrounding it, we are told, once formed part of a stately hall. Farther away is a ruined building whose walls are closely embraced by the myriad stems of a banyan tree. This was once the repository of untold wealth. In another place some walls are pointed out as the remains of a mint. Of other places tales are told of hoards of hidden treasure waiting to enrich the man who can find the secret place where it lies buried.

Here once lived the Jagat Seths—the Rothschilds of India. The path leading down to the river was once a fine road flanked with seven gates and lined with the dwellings of sepoys who guarded their wealthy master. This plot of ground now covered with jungle and bare of human habitation was once a busy hive of 4,000 people. The mound was once a palace—the Shahnashin or Seat of the Emperor—worthy to receive the Nawab Nazim of Bengal and Lord Clive when they came together to consult Jagat Seth. Clive was thinking of the men who once lived here when he said “The city of Muxadavad is as extensive, populous, and rich, as the city of London ; with this difference that there are individuals in the first possessing infinitely greater property than any of the last city” ; and Burke, when

he referred to bankers in India who once vied in capital with the Bank of England had in his mind the house of Jagat Seth. "As the Ganges pours its water into the sea by a hundred mouths," writes a Bengali poet, "so wealth flowed into the treasury of the Seths."

The history of this house is the theme of the following pages. It has been gathered from the Bengal records of the East India Company, from the writings of Indian historians, from the few documents remaining in the possession of the head of the house—sole survivors of the destruction wrought by flood and earthquake—, and from traditions handed down in the family. We shall relate how Hiranand Saho transplanted the family from its home in Rajputana to Patna ; how his son, Manik Chand, established it first at Dacca and then at Murshidabad and how under him and his successor the house became great in Bengal and powerful at Delhi. We shall see how at this period, when the semi-regal Nawabs of Bengal were at the height of their power, the bankers of Murshidabad came into connection with the English merchants at Calcutta whose relations with the Government were frequently strained on account of the Nawab's attempts to extort money from them. At such times as these we shall find Jagat Seth acting as mediator between the English and the Nawab and we shall note the fact that whereas the officials of the Government, high and low, always ready (as Poohbah would have said) to be insulted with a considerable bribe, the Seths of Murshidabad never demanded money from the English as the price of the services they rendered them. Then will follow the events that led to the battle of Plassey and the rise of the British dominion in Bengal. It will appear from the narrative that the English would never have accomplished all they did without the aid of Jagat Seth and that his alliance with them was not tainted with the greed of men like Omichand nor with the chicanery and treachery of others. The troubled years 1760-1765, when Lord Clive was absent from India, will next engage our attention. The events of these years and the conduct of the Company's servants have been condemned by historians and at the time they were viewed with disapproval by the Directors of the Company. One fact, however, should not be forgotten. These men did not pretend to be the rulers of the country responsible for the welfare of its

inhabitants. They were merchants, pursuing the ideals of merchants. Their first aim was to further the interests of the Company whose servants they were, and their second aim was to make their own fortunes by means of the system of private trade which was sanctioned by the Company and which at this time, presented greater opportunities than ever for the acquisition of wealth. "The general idea at this time entertained by the servants of the Company," says Sraffton, "was, that the battle of Plassey did only restore us to the same situation we were in before the capture of Calcutta: the Subah was conceived to be as independent as ever, and the English returned into their commercial character, with no other alteration in their function, than a full indemnification for their losses, and a small acquisition of territory, which it was thought might defray the military expenses of their garrisons, grown too burthensome to be supported by their trade alone: if the forces were to take the field in support of the Subah, it was to be at his expense. These were the mutual conditions."<sup>1</sup> In considering the blessings which have flowed to Bengal from the battle of Plassey the conduct of the Company's servants during these years of transition will fade into insignificance and we shall rather direct our attention to the long line of Governors and officials who from the time of Warren Hastings to the present day had, and have, the welfare of the people ever before them, who—

Beneath the further stars  
 Bear the greater burden:  
 Set to serve the lands they rule,  
 (Save he serve no man may rule)  
 Serve and love the lands they rule;  
 Seeking praise nor guerdon.

It will be seen that up to this point our story will be intimately connected with the history of Bengal the course of which the Seths did much to shape. It cannot be said that this history is an inspiring subject of study but, at least, it compares favourably with the contemporary history of the Emperors

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1. Observations on Mr. Vansittart's Narrative by Luke Sraffton (1766) p. 2.

at Delhi. The time was out of joint. We shall note one short period during which, according to Indian historians, the Government was blessed by the people it ruled and we shall see that the Jagat Seth of the time was largely responsible for this good government. In military affairs we shall allude to one gallant retreat brilliantly carried out to a successful issue. But, in general, the reader must not expect a picture of a benevolent government and contented subjects, of chivalrous soldiers and a loyal people or the story of great causes and high ideals. He may rather expect, as Clive wrote to the first British historian of Bengal, "fighting, tricks, chicanery, intrigues, politics and the Lord knows what."

The concluding portion of the book has to deal with a period of decline. When the sceptre passed from the line of Mir Jafar power and wealth departed from the house of Jagat Seth. The streams of wealth to which the Bengali poet refers ceased to flow into their treasury. But the transfer of the seat of Government from Murshidabad to Calcutta would not have been so disastrous to Jagat Seth had not other circumstances combined to render it so. An inability or disinclination of the head of the house to adapt himself to the new conditions, aided by extravagance and a series of disasters, dissipated the immense hoards of former Jagat Seths. But we shall not have to record the total downfall of the house. There is still a Jagat Seth at Murshidabad. He does not possess the colossal wealth of some of his predecessors but the goddess Lakshmi has not entirely refused her favours. He does not occupy the high position among the nobility of Bengal that was held by Jagat Seth Mahtab Rai but he is still regarded as the head of the Oswal community to which all the Jagat Seths have belonged. His title has been officially recognised by the British Government and it is in common use among his countrymen and the British Government has permitted him to add the words "Jagat Seth" to his name for the purposes of official and social intercourse.

## INTRODUCTION

This compilation by late Mr. J. H. Little was published in *Bengal Past and Present* 1920-21. He collected his materials mainly from India Office records, *Siya-ul-Mutakkerin*, *Riyaz-us-Salatin*, Jagat Seth family papers, Scrafton's *Reflections*, Vansittart's *Narrative*, Wilson's *Annals*, and dependable secondary sources. He has also recorded some traditions cherished by the Jagat Seth family. This history extends from 1717 to 1767 with a prologue and an epilogue. Though the compilation is in the form of family history the compiler gives a fairly detailed account of the momentous changes that took place in Bengal during these fifty years with special reference to the relations of the Jagat Seth family with the English East India Company.

Money has always been a power in human affairs. This is the history of a financial dynasty and its money power. The Jagat Seth house was to the Bengal Nawabs what the Fuggers of Augsburg were to Emperor Charles V of Germany and the Medicis of Florence were to the Papacy in the Middle Ages. But the comparison with the Medicis is perhaps unfair. There is nothing for the cultural historian in this family history.

Marwari bankers and traders became conspicuous in the economic life of India in the eighteenth century. It is a curious fact that this period of anarchy in the history of India coincided with their emergence. A wealthy "Indian banker and merchant "Marwari Bara" became very prominent in Astrakan about the same time that the Jagat Seths came into prominence in the financial life of eastern India". (*Indo-Russian Relations in the 17th and 18th centuries* by K. A. Antonova—XXVI International Congress of Orientalists). From Astrakan to Dacca finance and commerce came to be dominated by the Marwaris in the first half of the eighteenth century.

During the Mughal period Marwar enjoyed considerable trade. Its chief mart Pali was the connecting link between the west Indian sea coast and northern India. "Pali was the

entrepot for the eastern and western regions where the productions of India, Kashmir and China (Tibet?) were interchanged for those of Europe, Africa, Persia and Arabia. Caravans (Kitars) from the ports of Cutch and Gujarat imported elephant's teeth, copper, dates, gum-arabic, borax, coco-nuts, broad cloths, silks, sandalwood, camphor, dyes, drugs, oxide, sulphate of arsenic, spices, coffee etc. In exchange they received chintzes, dried fruits, Jira (assafoetida from Multan), sugar, opium (from Kota and Malwa), silks and fine cloths, potash, shawls, dyed blankets, arms and salt of home manufacture" (*Tod-Annals and Antiquities of Rajasthan*—Vol. II —Marwar). Thus the sons of Marwar learned how to earn money by trade. Of this knowledge they made very good use in the eighteenth century. The aridity of the native soil was an inducement to adventure abroad.

Banking business in Bengal was not in the hands of the Bengalis. This state of things can be explained historically. Vallal Sen, who ruled in Bengal during the years 1158—1179, gave new ranks to different castes. It is said that the Suvarnabaniks, the bankers of Bengal, did not advance him money when he needed it. He took his revenge by giving them a low rank in a new caste hierarchy. The Hindu propensity to social sub-divisions made much of it. The Suvarnabaniks or bankers naturally resented this slight. The evil influence of this ranking list explains to a large extent how bankers from other parts of India, who did not care for this local caste ranking, could easily establish themselves in Bengal ever afterwards.

Hiranand Saho came from Nagar in Marwar to Patna in 1652. At Patna he set up a *Kothee* or banking establishment which began to lend money to the servants of the English East India Company for the purchase of saltpetre. Thus this banking family came into business contact with the British when they were yet obscure traders and the family was also quite obscure. Manik Chand, the eldest of his seven sons, migrated to Dacca in search of his fortune about the end of the seventeenth century. Dacca was then the capital of Mughal Bengal and the most important centre of river-borne trade in eastern India. Trade transactions in this inland port must have amount-



ed to more than ten millions a year. The English East India Company's men were purchasing the products of Bengal's looms. The Dutch purchased 'lywaten' or cotton piece-goods for sale in South East Asia and in Europe. The French were also there competing with the Dutch and the English. The Armenian and Gujrati merchants and other Indian and non-Indian merchants were no less conspicuous. Bankers with their timely supply of credit did excellent business in this very competitive market. Manik Chand's *Kothee* began to prosper.

When Murshid Quli Khan, who was the supreme head of financial administration in the province, transferred his headquarters to Makhsudabad, Manik Chand, who was a favourite of the Diwan, accompanied him to the new centre of administration. Murshid Quli Khan became Deputy Subahdar and then Subahdar of Bengal. The Subahdari establishment was also removed from Dacca to Makhsudabad, named Murshidabad with the emperor's permission. This city now became the capital of the province. But a naib Subahdari establishment was maintained in Dacca. Dacca remained a mint town of the Mughal empire. It was still a very important trade mart. Manik Chand's *Kothee* at Dacca continued to do brisk business. It continued as one of the most important branches of the house. He had also a banking establishment of his own at Patna. There were branches at Hughli, Calcutta, Benares and other places in northern India. We do not know exactly when the house established its pre-eminent position in Delhi. Fateh Chand, successor of Manik Chand, got the title of Jagat Seth as a hereditary distinction in 1722. Long before this the house must have established its ascendancy in the money market at the Mughal capital. After Manik Chand's death in 1714, Fateh Chand, his nephew, succeeded him. In 1717, Raghunandan, Murshid Quli Khan's Daroga of the mint, died. Fateh Chand was placed in charge of the Nawab's mint at Murshidabad. He has been described in Dutch records as the "greatest money-changer of Hindustan". His name appeared so often in the books of the Dutch Company that the Directors in Holland were in doubt as to whether he was a person or an institution. From Dutch records we learn that the Jagat Seth *Kothee* at Chinsura was styled Fateh Chand Anandachandji. Anandachand was

Fatehchand's son who predeceased him. Fateh Chand had another son Dyachand who also died before him. The Central Office at Murshidabad was styled Manikchandji Anandchandji. The Dacca *Kothee* was styled Seth Manik Chand Jagat Seth Fateh Chandji. At Patna their *Kothee* had another name Manik Chandji Dyachandji. The Dutch wrote that it was the habit of these Indian bankers like the European bankers to preserve the names of departed bankers of great credit. From Dutch records we also learn that all money-changers in Bengal and many in Bihar, who were not connected with them, became bankrupt or were brought to bankruptcy. The monopolising tendency of finance capital operated. The premium charged by the shroffs on different varieties of coins in Bengal and Bihar depended upon the rates approved by the Jagat Seth house. (Dutch Archives—*Trade letter dated 14th February 1755, my microfilm copy roll I*).

Fateh Chand could provide the Nawab's government from time to time with enormous sums of money and by this means, as the Dutch put it, he could induce the government to take such measures and pass such regulations for the rate of money exchange as would favour the house. All the efforts of the English and the Dutch by means of presents to the under-officers and leading amirs to obtain the use of the mint failed. The Calcutta Council was informed "While Fateh Chand is so great with the Nabab, they can have no hopes of that grant, he alone having the sole use of the mint, nor dare any other shroff buy or coin a rupee's worth of silver" (Wilson—*Annals* III p. 369). But the Nawab was within his legal rights because the Farrukh Siyar farman which gave the English East India Company the privilege of coining their silver in the Nawab's mint was to be effective only if it suited the convenience of the local government. The *Hasb-ul-hukum* or Imperial rescript has been thus translated: "The Bengal government should afford facilities for the coining of the Company's gold and silver in the mint at Murshidabad in the season of coining other merchants' money if it was not against the King's interest." (S. Bhattacharya—*The East India Company and the Economy of Bengal*—Appendix): The Nawab was thus given the option of interpreting whether this order could be given effect to. Murshid Quli,

Shujauddin and Alivardi agreed with Jagat Seth Fateh Chand and after him with Jagat Seth Mahtab Rai that this privilege could not be extended to the British. It was against the interest of the realm. The Farrukh Siyar farman contained another clause—"The Madras rupees, provided they were as good as those coined at Surat, should pass in Bengal without discount." But no government, however well inclined it might be, could determine the discount rate of different varieties of coins. Warren Hastings and Cornwallis failed in a similar attempt in the seventies and eighties of the eighteenth century. The Nawab's government could not have given effect to this recommendation even if it had tried. The English and the Dutch complained about the "unsuppleness" of the government. They regarded this as an indication of the ascendancy of the house of Jagat Seth.

The batta on re-coinage was a source of considerable profit to the house. The charge of stamping the rupees afresh was reasonable and the profit which the house derived after meeting the government demand was very considerable. Even as late as 1837-38 the East India Company's mint receipts from re-coinage was Rs. 502,745. In 1838-39 this amounted to Rs. 575,409 (*Letter from Government of India to the Court of Directors*—Finance Dept. 24 June, 1846). In the eighteenth century there were so many different varieties of coins in Bengal to be exchanged into siccas. But there was no currency anarchy because the Jagat Seth house could control the operations of the shroffs. The house remained the sole purchaser of all the bullion imported to Bengal.

The house of Jagat Seth received land revenue payments made by zamindars and amils (collectors). Other government collections were also received in its houses of business. To this house was also entrusted the task of remitting the annual tribute to Delhi. Between 1728 and 1740 this was partly paid by drafts on their *Kothee* at Delhi. This house therefore functioned in Bengal as the state bank. In the words of the people at the Nawab's Darbar "Fateh Chand's estate was deemed as the king's treasure."

The business connection of the house with the English in Bengal began in 1706 under Manik Chand. Between 1718 and

1730 the English took from the Murshidabad *Kothee* of the house of Jagat Seth loans amounting on an average to four lakhs a year. Their Dacca, Calcutta and Patna establishments must have taken similar loans from nearby Jagat Seth *Kothees*, whenever necessary. The case of Kantu, which is discussed at some length by the compiler, shows the complicated nature of this connection. The private trade of the Company's servants was mixed up with the public trade of the Company. But officially the Company's servants were not prepared to admit it at the darbar. This tangle created contentions between the Calcutta Council and Fateh Chand on two occasions, once in 1730 and again in 1743. The Fateh Chand-Kantu affair in 1730 showed how inexorable Fateh Chand could be in money matters. The Company was to pay, according to his contention, the sum of Rs. 2,45,000. The Calcutta Council argued that part of it was due from the Company's servants and the Company was not responsible for it. He appeared, after prolonged negotiations, to yield but when the Company again needed his services at the darbar he succeeded in securing what he considered to be his rightful demand. As all English trade was represented at the darbar as the Company's trade in order to secure immunity from search and customs charges the Jagat Seth house was not prepared to differentiate between two categories of debts, one incurred in private trade and the other in public trade. The Calcutta Council became convinced that if they were to trade in Bengal "Futteh Chand must be satisfied." The lesson was driven home that "the house must be kept in temper."

The house of Jagat Seth was the centre of commercial credit in eastern India. It regulated the rates of exchange, superseded the necessity for the transfer of bullion and afforded a permanent supply of capital at all times. It was safe, judicious, large-scale banking, not guided by any speculative spirit. Its vast capital was steadily and beneficially employed in augmenting trade. There was a system of mutual accommodation between government and the bank which is perhaps contrary to the principles of banking but in the existing circumstances this was inevitable.

J. H. Little is concerned almost exclusively with the relations of the house with the English East India Company. The

Dutch, the French and the country traders are almost ignored. There were so many rivals for the purchase of the products of Bengal's looms, Bengal's raw silk, saltpetre and other commodities that timely supply of credit was very necessary. This suited Jagat Seth's policy of short term commercial credit. In 1757 the Dutch borrowed 4 lakhs at 9 p.c. and the French debt to the Jagat Seth house amounted to a million and a half at the time of the capture of Chandernagore. The trade of Dacca, Calcutta, Hughli, Chandernagore, trade, inland and foreign, depended very much on this timely supply of credit. In a highly competitive market their reasonable credit terms and constant supply of capital were of great help to merchants of all categories. The house was almost punctilious on its part in the observance of its engagements.

There was a single composite money market in eastern India with the Jagat Seth house in control. Its credit was great in Delhi, in all important business centres in western India and in all important centres of overland trade outside India. Turani merchants from Central Asia, Armenian merchants trading with Basra, Mocha, Jeddah, depended on this house as much as merchants from Upper India, English and French private traders and English, French and Dutch East India Companies. Trade in cotton piece goods, raw silk, silk piece goods and saltpetre in which Bengal specialised during these years had a world market extending from South-East Asia to the Khanates of Khiva and Bokhara, from the Persian Gulf to Astrakan and even beyond as far as Moscow. This volume of overland trade is not quantifiable in the existing state of our knowledge. The Indian merchants from Punjab and Sind, Muslims, Marwaris and Sikhs, who traded in different parts of the Russian empire, had some sort of connection, however remote, with the Jagat Seths at Murshidabad. We would not be wrong if we presume that the merchants whose names are mentioned in Russian records of the period—Matu, Balaram, Sukhanand, Chantu, Kasiram, Magandas and Indo-Tartar merchants in Russian territories and in Central Asian Khanates, were ready to accept hundis given by the Jagat Seth house (*Indo-Russian Trade Relations in the XVIII century*, Ed. by K. Antonova). The assassination of Nadir Shah in 1747 and subsequent disturbances in

Persia dislocated this brisk traffic. But when the Afghan invader Ahmad Shah entered Delhi in 1757, he could not disregard the money power of this house. When he held his court in the Diwan-i-am the most honoured man in his darbar was the representative of the house of Jagat Seth because he alone could stand as security for the amirs from whom the invader wanted to extort money (Nuruddin Hasan—*Life of Najib-ud-daula* translated by J. N. Sarkar, *Indian Historical Quarterly* 1933). This house thus not only eased the operations of commerce; it was prepared to meet extraordinary monetary demands during recurring political crises. Murshidabad was for fifty years the centre of gravity of commercial credit and the principal loan market of northern India.

Political influence was a consequence of huge finance capital. The house enjoyed great prestige and exerted very considerable influence on the Mughal Court during the period 1717 to 1767. It has been said that it was at the intercession of Fateh Chand that Murshid Quli Khan, who had incurred the Mughal emperor's displeasure, was restored to his trust and favour in 1722. But Fateh Chand did not exert his influence at Delhi to obtain an Imperial farman for Sarfaraz, Murshid Quli's grandson, though he had every reason to be grateful to Murshid Quli for all the favours he had enjoyed. Fateh Chand did not perhaps directly take any part in the intrigues which helped Shuja-ud-din (not Shuja-ud-daula as J. H. Little describes him) to succeed Murshid Quli in 1727. But Fateh Chand's support must have stood him in good stead and facilitated his moves in Delhi. Shuja-ud-din was therefore even more generous than Murshid Quli in his favours to Fateh Chand. Fateh Chand's support of Alivardi's cause was cautious but not open. He was one of the prime movers of the Revolution of 1740. After the defeat and death of Sarfaraz Fateh Chand helped Alivardi in getting the farman of Subahdarship from the Mughal emperor. Siraj-ud-daula could not for some time get Imperial confirmation and he suspected that the Seths were using their influence against him. He took Mahtab Rai and Swarup Chand to task for this delay. The role of Mahatab Rai and Swarup Chand in the intrigues that culminated in the battle of Plassey is very clear. They first supported Yar

Latif Khan (Luttee) and then persuaded him to throw in his lot with Mir Jafar. Jean Law wrote, "The path which led to the battle of Plassey had its beginning in Murshidabad and not in Calcutta and it was the Seths who placed the feet of the English in the path." He wrote further, "The Seths encouraged the Nawab in a false impression about this (Chandernagore) affair. . . . they managed so well that they undid in the evening all that I had done in the morning."

Fateh Chand engineered the revolution of 1740. Mahatab Rai and Swarup Chand followed in his footsteps in 1757. But history did not repeat itself in the same style. Alivardi had depended on his own armed strength and on treachery in the ranks of Sarfaraz. Mir Jafar depended entirely on the armed strength of the British. His only contribution to victory at Plassey was his treachery. He sank into the position of 'Clive's Jack-ass'. The revolution of 1740 placed Fateh Chand at the height of his fortune. The revolution of 1757 marked the rapid decline of the Jagat Seth house.

These semi-regal bankers of Murshidabad, omnipotent in Bengal and powerful in Delhi, never demanded money of the English as the price of their many services at the Nawab's darbar. According to J. H. Little, "The Seths were not tainted with the greed of Omichand or the treachery of others." The charge of treachery to Sarfaraz and Siraj-ud-daula cannot be denied though they might have good reasons for bringing about the revolutions of 1740 and 1757. They did not certainly have anything to do with the plunder of the Murshidabad treasury after the battle of Plassey by Clive, Watts, Scrafton, Nobkissen, Ramchand and others. It was estimated that the Nawab's treasury contained about 40 crores—possibly an exaggeration. On the basis of this calculation Omichand's share of 5 p.c. was to have amounted to 20 lakhs. Omichand, we all know, was duped. But the treasury, outer and inner, was thoroughly looted. The Jagat Seths must have been opposed to looting of any treasury from an instinct of self-preservation. In this case they did not certainly intend their nominee, the new Nawab, to start with this handicap of an empty treasury. They must have been powerless to prevent this plunder. Accord-

ding to *Siyar-ul-Mutakkerin* they had offered the British three crores of rupees as the cost of this expedition against Siraj-ud-daula. This rumour was undoubtedly a popular exaggeration. But it is not unlikely that they might have offered to pay for the expenses of the expedition. The Jagat Seths were Nawab-makers in 1740 and 1757, the Calcutta Council made and unmade Nawabs in 1760, 1763 and 1765. The motto of the members of the Calcutta Council, avid for plunder, was "How many lakhs shall I put in my pocket."

Jagat Seth Mahtab Rai and Maharaja Swarup Chand were victims of the revolution which they had brought about. This has happened so often in history. The rapid decline of this house began after Plassey. Mir Qasim was "the Satan who buffeted them." He seized them, brought them to Munghyr, killed them at Barr in Bihar and took some of the members of the family with him in his exile as captives to be ransomed later. But the revolution of 1757 created those conditions that would have brought about this rapid decline even without any violence. The loot of Plassey, subsequent acquisition of lakhs by the servants of the Company as presents, perquisites and profits of privileged private inland trade, created new conditions over which the Jagat Seth house had no control. It was not necessary for the servants of the Company to borrow money any longer for their private trade. Their privileged private trade, facilitated by political control, deterred merchants from other parts of India from coming to Bengal in large numbers because they felt that in Bengal the British trader was supreme. The Company's official trade—Investment—was no longer dependent upon short term credit from the Seths. The Company had now sufficient surplus in its treasury except in times of war. The Dutch, the French (after 1763) and the Danes no longer depended upon the financial support of the Seths. The servants of the Company put their money into the treasury of the Dutch, French and Danish East India Companies for transmission to Europe by bills of exchange. "There was a great deal of capital without any certificate of birth. According to one of the lists laid before Parliament the Company and its employees from 1757 to 1766 got £ 6,000,000 from the Indians as gifts." (Marx—*Capital*—Vol. I Ed. Dona Torr—



p. 777) The export trade of Bengal became altogether independent of Jagat Seth finance after Plassey.

They still controlled for some time the batta on coins in spite of the operation of the mint in Calcutta. Their trade in rupees was "a fund of infinite wealth to the family." Sicca rupees circulated for twelve months at their face value, then fell 3 per cent under the denomination *hirsuns*. After the second year they fell again by 2 p.c. and came to be known as sonauts. They continued to be so denominated until they were again brought into the mint and re coined as siccas. In different parts of Bengal different varieties of coins like French Arcot, Dutch Arcot, Madras Arcot, Waziri, Narayani etc. were current and the shroffs fixed their value in terms of sicca rupees. This very complicated business was controlled by the Jagat Seth house for more than five decades, and the principal shroffs were under their control. But these shroffs quickly took advantage of the misfortune that overtook the house and asserted their independence of central control. In the sixties there was a disordered currency and Jagat Seth Khushal Chand and Maharaja Udwat Chand could no longer check this disorder. The administration of the East India Company was equally helpless in the face of growing currency confusion. It was not able until about the nineties of the eighteenth century in bringing order out of chaos. The ascendancy of the Jagat Seth house was by then a dim and distant memory.

After the grant of Diwani to the English East India Company a board was set up. The members were Md. Reza Khan (Naib Diwan), Maharaja Durlabh Ram, Jagat Seth Khushal Chand and Maharaja Udwat Chand. The treasury had three different locks with three different keys. One of the keys was in possession of the Seths. The Jagat Seth house could not possibly like this arrangement. They lost their exclusive hold over the shroffing of revenues—examining, sorting and weighing of various kinds of rupees and settling the batta upon all in terms of sicca rupees. This was their shroffage on the *Kutchā amdāni* or gross payment. Bolts has shown (*Considerations* p. 159) that in Bihar the chief of the Patna Council's Diwan, in imitation of the Jagat Seths, took upon himself the

amount of payment from the zamindars, gave the government a *paat* or receipt for the amount and got from the zamindars an allowance of 10 p.c. *paatwan* (commission) upon the sum for the use of his credit. Thus the Seths were squeezed out from this avenue of wealth.

Their prestige had suffered so much by 1765 that Jagat Seth Khushal Chand and Maharaja Udwatchand, who were the two most potent private men in India, could be bullied by Johnstone, Senior, Leicester and Middleton of the Calcutta Council when they came to Murshidabad to settle succession after the death of Mir Jafar. The Councillors demanded, "If you want to have your business go freely on make us an acknowledgement" (Rs. 125,000). Such extortion by menaces from the Jagat Seth house was unthinkable even in 1760. In 1766 they laid a claim for 51 lakhs which they had paid to Mir Jafar. Clive would accept only 21 lakhs to be repaid in ten years half by the English and half by the Nawab. Clive charged them with avarice because they were pressing the zamindars to discharge their debts to their father while these zamindars were five months in arrears to the government. They could pay the ransom for the captive members of the family whom Mir Qasim had delivered into the hands of the mutsuddies of the Imperial court by pawning jewels and by borrowing. But when Khushal Chand was offered by Clive a pension of three lakhs a year he declined. At that time Khushal Chand was in the habit of spending a lakh a month. This unabated extravagance hastened the decline. We know that Mahtab Rai and Swarup Chand used to bring Dacca muslin valued at Rs. 150,000 a year for their household use in 1747. The Nawab's household took about Rs. 300,000 a year at that time (Abdul Karim—*Dacca the Mughal Capital*). It was absurd for Khushal Chand to imitate the profusion of his father and grandfather. At the time of the famine of 1770 he could donate only Rs. 5,000/- for famine relief, (Hunter—*Annals of Rural Bengal* App.) while Gopi Mondal, an obscure merchant of Dinagepore, could spend Rs. 50,000/- for relief of distress. (Buchanan—*Dinagepore Report*—Br. Mus. Add. 28973). The close association of the Jagat Seths with the Company ceased after the departure of Clive in 1767. When the seat of the government was transferred from Murshidabad to Calcutta the

house ceased to enjoy the prestige which association with the governing power could bring.

They gradually ceased to dominate the money market even in the field of indigenous banking. From 1717 to 1756 the tendency of this house was towards monopolistic banking in Bengal and Bihar. But there were now many rivals in the field. The estimate of Bolts was that in the early sixties the house had a capital of 7 krors—"as his countrymen calculate" (*Considerations* p. 158). In their heyday they must have owned at least 14 krors. The interest rate of the Jagat Seth house was normally 9 p.c. The house did not charge what has been described as oriental rates of interest. The Bank of England in those days charged 8 p.c. The house ensured a sound system of bank credit and brought indigenous banking to the greatest height to which it could possibly rise. The phenomenal rise was due to certain favourable circumstances which could not recur again. Ghulam Husain writes, "In Alivardi's time they lived in Bengal with so much credit and authority as is hardly credible at this distance of time. . . . their riches were so great that no such bankers were ever seen in Hindostan or Deccan . . . . nor was there any banker or merchant that could stand comparison with them all over India. Their wealth was such that there is no mentioning it without seeming to exaggerate and to deal in extravagant fables. Their sons, in consequence of the superiority acquired by the English in all branches of trade over Bengal and Hindostan, fall vastly short of the wealth of their fathers." (*Mutakkerin* II 458) Alexander Macrabie, brother-in-law of Philip Francis, wrote to a friend in America, "Perhaps even this generation may read of the trade and riches of India as they read of Soloman's cargo, gold of Ophir and ships of Tarshish" (*The Francis Letters* Ed. by Beata Francis and Eliz Keary vol. I, 20th Dec. 1744). Macrabie was writing this epitaph on the riches of India in the days of Jagat Seth Khushal Chand.

Circumstances became more and more unfavourable. Khushal Chand and Udwat Chand were unable to stem the rot. Their rivals, even in the limited field of indigenous banking, succeeded in outstripping them. Mir Qasim's attempt to set up the bank-

*ing house of Bolaki Das as a rival to the house of Jagat Seth had met with failure. But Gopal Das, Bhowany Das and Ballam Das set up a banking business at Benares when the rapid decline of the Jagat Seth house was about to begin. Gopal Das who had '8 annas share'—this was the Indian way of indicating half share—died in 1787. The firm which was styled Bhyaram Gopal Das in Benares and Monhar Das Dwaraka Das in Calcutta and Murshidabad—their joint venture worth about a krór of rupees—had its *kooties* at Nagpur, Cuttack, Bombay, Surat, Poona, Calcutta and Murshidabad. It became more important than the Jagat Seth house in the field of indigenous banking in northern India. Monhar Das, one of four sons of Gopal Das, died in 1818. His son Mukund lall inherited assets valued at 20 lakhs. Indigenous banking in eastern India was no longer dominated by one single house with an almost unlimited supply of finance capital. The Jagat Seth house had declined so far by the end of the eighteenth century that its banking became little more than small scale usury and hundi business.*

There was no longer a single composite money market. European banks had made their appearance—Bank of Hindustan in 1770, Bengal Bank in 1784, General Bank of India in 1786, Bank of Bengal in 1806. The Bank of Bengal received government support in 1809 and later became the Chief Presidency Bank. The Union Bank, a commercial bank, came into existence in 1829. All these banks failed with the exception of the Bank of Bengal. But they were trading on borrowed capital and indigenous banks did not receive deposits from their clients. Indigenous banking continued to deal mainly in the credit instruments of the Indian money market. European banking, inspite of its initial failure, added a new dimension to banking business.

Indigenous banking which emerged from the debris of the Jagat Seth house does not appear to have an inadequate cash nexus. But capital was scattered and there was stagnation. For a long time the European banks had no upcountry branches. Their foundation was also very shaky. After the decline of the Jagat Seths indigenous banking also degenerated into small scale business in money. "In every large town shroffs dealt in hundis

in much the same manner in which the bill broker of today buys and sells commercial paper. Indigenous banking business was largely restricted in issuing and discounting of hundis. There is no evidence that the shroffs and mahajans were prepared to receive deposits from their clients or the public at large. The hundi was the chief credit instrument in financing the movement and storage of agricultural produce". (*One hundred years of Banking in Asia and Africa*—G. Tyson p. 11). European commercial and financial enclave gradually became stronger and stronger particularly after the 1858 Act which enabled joint stock banking companies to be formed on the principle of limited liability. Indigenous banking was completely overshadowed.

The rapid decline of the house of Jagat Seth is best illustrated from the records of the Supreme Court. A case was instituted in the Supreme Court by Joykrishna Banerjee against Jagat Seth Indrachand and Seth Bishnu Chand, sons of Jagat Seth Harakh Chand. This was in connection with a transaction in their Dacca *Kothee* during the years 1814-1821. Joykrishna Banerjee had pecuniary dealings with the house of Jagat Seth at Dacca. He used to lend money to British private traders in Dacca. His own fund not being sufficient he sometimes borrowed money from the Jagat Seth *Kothee* there. His contention was that the *kothee* charged premium at a rate which was higher than what was agreed upon to be paid and the exchange on Calcutta was higher than what was claimed. He was, he said, kept confined in the Dacca *Kothee* of the Jagat Seth house and by threats compelled to subscribe to an agreement which showed an unjust balance against him. When the case came before the Supreme Court the Seths pleaded to the jurisdiction. The plaintiff replied, "Your orator cannot have adequate remedy and relief at law except in a court of equity."

Another case which refers to events occurring in 1822 reveals another stage in the declining fortune of the house. It was a case instituted by Jagat Seth Govind Chand of Murshidabad, son of Jagat Seth Indra Chand against Raja Haranath. His contention was that the defendant induced him to sell some

diamonds and jewels valued at Rs. 60,000 because he wanted to be resplendent in his gorgeous costume when he would see the Governor-General in his darbar. The defendant agreed to pay Rs. 40,000 and interest at the rate of 12 p.c. from September, 1822. The defendant's case was that he came to Calcutta for the purpose of defending a suit. Jagat Seth Indrachand was indebted to him for sicca rupees 100,000 besides interest. He demanded payment. Jewels were sent as part payment valued at Rs. 40,000. He was asked not to sell them in Calcutta at a lower price. The jewels were valued at Rs. 13,000. Indrachand was very ill at that time. Duniram Dubey, his manager, saw defendant and requested him not to press his claims. Jagat Seth Indrachand died a few days after. Duniram Dubey informed him that the house was not in a position to pay. Raja Haranath got a verdict for the full sum of Rs. 100,000 together with interest.

Was clannishness one of the defects of the house of Jagat Seth in the days of its glory as also in the days of its decline? Their employees and many of their agents belonged to the Oswal community of the Jains. But clannishness, assuming the charge to be true, could also have been a source of strength because of the closely knit character of the personnel. Duniram Dubey was their mooktear or manager at Murshidabad in 1822, Murlidhar Dubey at Dacca. Murlidhar was succeeded by Ramdial Tewari. His successor was Lala Dharanidhar. These names, however, indicate that the house did not confine its choice of officers to the Oswal community.

'The quick pulse of gain' was no longer there. The Jagat Seth house, with its enormous capital, separated the functions of the banker and trader, directed the energies, skill and means of the merchant more efficiently to purely commercial pursuits. In the closing years of the eighteenth century and the first third of the nineteenth century capital was scattered and bankers in most cases combined banking with trading. The European agency houses, in many cases, combined banking with overtrading. They collapsed during the years 1830-1833. The Jagat Seth house, even in their changed circumstances, could not think of trafficking in opium and indigo. But internal trade

was a very safe investment and large capitalistic enterprises could have been organised in the sphere of local trade. There were many petty shroffs, who were at the same time traders on a small scale operating from their headquarters at Burrabazar in Calcutta. Theirs was mean efficiency. Their small scale business never inspired confidence or respect. The Jagat Seth house, with its exalted tradition, was perhaps incapable of becoming inland traders. Moreover, as C. E. Trevelyan pointed out in 1834, "The profession of the merchant in the interior of the country is both unpleasant and disreputable on account of the complete state of dependence in which the most respectable people are placed on the meanest custom house officer by Secs. 19 and 23 of Reg. IX of 1810." Trevelyan added: "The mercantile character is held in low estimation. When respectable people in the provinces, who have capital lying idle on their hands and who probably complain of the difficulty of finding employment for it, are asked, why they do not engage in trade, almost invariably reply that they cannot supplicate every low peon on four rupees a month, who has the power of detaining their goods under pretence of searching them." (*Report on Inland Customs and Town Duty*). In 1836 internal customs barriers were removed as a consequence of Trevelyan Report. But the inland trader's mercantile character was held in such low estimation for about a quarter of a century that the Jagat Seths could not stoop so low. They also succumbed to the atmosphere of indolent contentment which prevailed in Bengal.

The most surprising feature of this decline was their growing litigiousness. They caught the contagion of this spirit, one of the vices which British justice undoubtedly fostered. Fortunately for this house the family was not prolific and very few of the Jagat Seths had more than one son and on more than one occasion the succession had to be continued by adoption. But we find that in 1822 Indrachand and Bishnuchand had disputes for the division of the inheritance which Bishnuchand brought before the Supreme Court. A partition suit was instituted by the younger brother against the elder for the division of their property in Burrabazar in Calcutta which was valued at Rs. 100,000 or thereabouts. No family dispute had

before been brought to law courts. A commission of partition was his issue. The banking community very rarely brought succession disputes to law courts. It was also the custom among the bankers to settle even their accounts among themselves by arbitration. What was now done by the younger Seth was exactly in the style in which joint family fortunes were dissipated in Bengal.

Two hundis are reproduced here as specimens to indicate the type and scale of Jagat Seth business in its days of decline.

1821

Juggat Seat Inderchunder

*vs.*

Joynarain Paul Choudhury

EXHIBIT C. Order for the amount to be received sent by Anundchundjee and Babu Gobindchundjee to Juggat Seat Khooshalchandjee and Babu Gobindchandjee at their own risk. To the Mansion of All Happiness—

Sri Casinath Doss—the present information is that the sum of sicca rupees 1500 has been received at Narayangange from Srijut Prem Ishwar Oomes Rutton Pall Choudhury and on the arrival of the order at Calcutta it is to be paid to Srijut the Holder. On the expiration of the fixed term of 21 days from this day you will pay sicca fifteen hundred rupees of market currency of that place in full and obtain a receipt.

Year 1225 date 19th Jaistha.

To the Mansion of all happiness.

Srijut Cossinath Poddar at the house of Sri Calisankar Ghose at Burrabazar in Calcutta.

Sri Sri Ganeshji Sahaya

∴ 74½ [It was a popular superstition that if any one except the addressee opened this letter he would incur the sin of killing so many persons that their sacred thread would weigh 74½ Mds.]

This is written to the worthy of respect Sri Panch Juggat Seth Khoosaulchandjee Baboo Govindchandjee at Calcutta from said Anundchandjee Baboo Govindchandjee at Dacca.



Respectable salutations, There is health and safety here. Yours is desired and wished for. You will learn the subject as follows—The sum of rupees 5,000 five thousand is paid here by Praim Issore Oomesh Rutton Paul Choudhury this day metee Choit Soodee Nowamee Sunday—eighteen days after this date you will pay to him the said sum in sicca rupees, current in the bazar as is used in hoondees. You will previous thereto make necessary inquiries and take a receipt in full on the back of the hoondees and you will carry the said amount to our debit. Sumbat 1876 Mittee Choit Soodee Sosthee Sunday.

This hoondie is sold by Sree Oomesh Rutton Paul Choudhury at Dacca and taken by Sri Raujkissore Baboo at Calcutta—payable to Sri Nettonaud Poddar.

Sri Nettonand Poddar

I have received in full amount  
of the hoondie 14th Bysack.

When Jagat Seth Gobindchand applied for a pension in 1844 and was granted Rs. 1,200/- a month the Court of Directors remarked that the decline of the family was as much due to mismanagement as to any unavoidable cause. The pension was “an acknowledgment of the former merits of the house towards the British Government.”

It was my privilege to see 8th Jagat Seth Fateh Chand, some time after partition and creation of Pakistan. He was then staying in his house at Mahimapur near Murshidabad. I could not help turning the conversation very discreetly towards finance. He referred to his difficulties in his land revenue collection from his zamindari in Jessore. This great banking family made Bengal its home and Bengal succeeded after several generations in turning the banker into a zamindar. Environment played its part in history.

N. K. SINHA.



## CHAPTER I.

### HIRANAND SAHO AND SETH MANIK CHAND.

#### 1.

The Marwaris of Rajputana occupy an eminent position among the mercantile community of India. For centuries past members of this race have left their homes in Marwar and spread themselves throughout India so that there are few parts of the country where some of them may not be found engaged in business as bankers, traders, or money-lenders. At the beginning of the 19th century it was estimated that nine-tenths of the bankers and commercial men of India were natives of Marwar.<sup>1</sup> Their success in business has become proverbial. "The three tufted ones," (Marwaris) says the Hindustani proverb, "the red-faced ones, (Europeans) and the cactus plant cannot live without increasing."<sup>2</sup> Nor has the acquisition of wealth hardened their hearts to the cry of the poor and afflicted. They have acquired an honourable distinction for their liberality in contributing towards works of public utility and in relieving the distress of those among whom they have made their homes.<sup>3</sup>

About the middle of the 17th century—or more precisely, on the 3rd day of the new moon of the month of Baisakh in the year 1709 Samvat, (1652 A.D.)<sup>4</sup> when Shah Jehan was Emperor of Hindostan, Hiranand Saho,<sup>5</sup> an inhabitant of Nagar

1. Tod's "Rajasthan" (Calcutta reprint, 1899) Vol. ii. p. 995.

2. Sir Herbert Risley, "The Peoples of India" (1908), p. 145.

3. "The Marwari community, always foremost when charity is the goal." Hon. P. C. Lyon in the "Statesman" August 24. 1913. Sir Richard Temple, "Men and Events of My Time in India" (1882), p. 420.

4. Note supplied by the present head of the family. In the conversion of Samvat dates "Useful Tables forming an Appendix to the Journal of the Asiatic Society" Part the Second, Table xiv (Calcutta 1836) has been used.

5. Saho, (Hind. Sah and Sahu) which we find in the English records written "saw" or "shaw," means a merchant or banker—Hobson Jobson (1903), p. 816.

in Marwar belonging to the Gailarha family of the tribe of Oswals, urged by the hereditary spirit of enterprise characteristic of his race, left the place of his birth and settled in Patna.

Patna was, at this time, a place of considerable trade, and many merchants and bankers had their dwellings within its walls. The arrival of Hiranand Saho at Patna was almost contemporaneous with the establishment of an English factory there. When Bridgeman and his companions left Balasore in 1652 to establish a factory at Hugli up the Ganges and open up the trade of Bengal to the English Company they were directed to invest at least half their stock in the purchase of saltpetre which could be best obtained from Patna. A subordinate factory at Patna soon followed with an outstation at Singhya on the saltpetre grounds. Before long the trade with Patna became so lucrative to the Company that their agent at Hugli was ordered to keep the saltpetre men constantly employed so as to have a stock always ready for shipment.<sup>6</sup> On more than one occasion the Company's servants at this factory had recourse to the descendants of Hiranand Saho for loans to enable them to carry on their trade.

No particulars have been handed down to us of Hiranand Saho's life at Patna. It will probably be safe to assert that he followed his calling as a banker with ability and success and became in course of time a man of influence in his adopted city. He worshipped the Jain gods and followed the precepts of the sacred writings of the Jains. In the event of a birth, marriage or death in his household Brahmans from Rajputana presided at the appropriate ceremony and each ceremony was conducted according to the customs and rites handed down among the Oswals from ancient times. We cannot say whether he was recognised by the Oswals as their head but it is certain that his descendants at Murshidabad received, and still receive to this day, that distinction.

Hiranand Saho died on the 4th day of the full moon of the month of Magh in the year 1768 Samvat (1711 A.D.)<sup>7</sup>. He had seven sons whose names have been handed down and one

6. Wilson, "Early Annals of the English in Bengal." Vol. I. pp. 25, 26, 33, 46.

7. From a note supplied by the present head of the family.

daughter<sup>8</sup> who married a son of Rai Uday Chand of Benares. The sons followed their father's profession and established banking houses in different parts of India. Six of them have fallen into almost total obscurity but the eldest, Manik Chand, who proceeded to Dacca, probably at the time when Prince Azimu-sh-shan, grandson of the Emperor Aurungzeb, was Viceroy of Bengal, was destined to become the first of the Seths of Murshidabad and to start that family on the career which made its name famous throughout the length and breadth of Hindostan.

## 2.

Dacca had irresistible attractions to a man who, like Manik Chand, wished to establish a banking business. It was then the capital of Bengal. The Nazim or Governor, the Diwan, whose authority was co-ordinate with rather than subordinate to that of the Nazim,<sup>9</sup> with all their officers and retainers, resided there. But in addition to this the situation of Dacca qualified it in an eminent degree to become a great emporium of trade. The rivers of Bengal were the highways of commerce. It was calculated that the river-borne trade of Bengal kept in constant employment 30,000 boatmen<sup>10</sup> and Dacca had direct communication with all the branches of this inland navigation. Its muslins and woven stuffs were of such fineness and beauty that they were eagerly sought after in Europe while the cotton from which they were manufactured was produced within the province<sup>11</sup>. The English Company established a factory there in 1668<sup>12</sup> and the French and Dutch had similar establishments.

The Nazim, Prince Azimu-sh-shan, did not disdain to com-

8. Ghose, "Modern History of the Indian Chiefs, etc.," Part II. p. 345 gives her name as Dhan Bai.

9. Stewart, "History of Bengal," (1813), p. 352.

10. Rennell, Memoir of a Map of Hindostan, p. 355. "Probably some mistake must have occurred in the calculation, as there are certainly at present much nearer ten times that number." Hamilton, Geographical, Statistical and Historical Description of Hindostan." Vol. I. p. 36.

11. Rennell, Memoir of a Map of Hindostan, p. 61.

12. Wilson, Early Annals of the English in Bengal, Vol. I. 45.

pete with the merchants in their race for wealth but before doing so he framed the rules in such a manner that his condescension should not go unrewarded. As a beginner he conceded himself a generous start. Up to a certain stage the trade was to be strictly exclusive (Sauda-i-Khas). His agents were to be stationed at all the ports and buy up on his behalf the cargoes of all the ships that arrived. Then the common merchants were to join in the trade (Sauda-i-Am). They could come to him and buy all the goods they required.<sup>13</sup> When the Emperor heard of the proceedings of his grandson he declared that this aristocratic method of trading was aristocratic madness<sup>14</sup> and public oppression and struck off 500 horse from the Prince's military rank. Soon after this incident and perhaps in consequence of it, the Emperor appointed Kartalab Khan—a strong man who had done good service in other parts of the empire—to the office of Diwan of Bengal and bestowed on him the title of Murshid Kuli Khan.<sup>15</sup> This step was to be of great moment to the fortunes of Manik Chand.

Murshid Kuli Khan became Diwan in 1701 and was responsible for the financial administration of the province. The task called forth all his powers. In the times of his predecessors in office large tracts of Crown lands had been granted as Jagirs<sup>16</sup> to military and civil officers and over these jagirs the Diwan had no control. The revenue was insufficient to provide for the expenses of the government and the pay of the soldiers so that other provinces of the Empire had to make good the deficiency in the revenues of Bengal. Murshid Kuli Khan's resolute measures, sanctioned beforehand by the Emperor, soon effected a complete change. With a few exceptions the jagirs were

13. *Riyazu-s-Salatin* (English translation by Maulvi Abdus Salam) pp. 246, 247.

14. Punning on the word "sauda" which in Persian means both "trade" and "madness." *Riyazu-s-Salatin*, Translator's Note, p. 247.

15. Stewart, *History of Bengal*, p. 352. *Riyazu-s-Salatin*, Translator's Note, p. 299. His original name was Mirza Hadi. First he received the title of Kartalab Khan, then that of Murshid Kuli Khan and lastly that of Mutaman-ul-Mulk Alau-d-daulah Jaffar Khan Nasiri Nasir Jang. The English writers of the 18th century usually call him Jaffier Khan.

16. A hereditary assignment of land and of its rent as annuity "Hobson Jobson" p. 446.

resumed and the jagirdars were granted land in Orissa in their stead. Retrenchments were made in the expenditure and the assessment and collection of the revenue were carried out under his vigilant supervision. In a short time Murshid Kuli Khan was able to send the Emperor a krór of rupees as the revenue of Bengal.

But Murshid Kuli Khan had roused up powerful enemies. The courtiers and favourites whose interests had suffered inflamed the mind of Prince Azimu-sh-shan against him. Nor was this difficult. The Prince had felt the strong hand of the Diwan. He found that his control over the revenue was limited to what his position as Nazim entitled him.<sup>17</sup> The rewards which Murshid Kuli Khan received from the Emperor filled him with envy and jealousy. A plot was formed to assassinate the Diwan and though this was unsuccessful Murshid Kuli Khan thought it prudent to remove from Dacca. "After much deliberation and consultation, he fixed on the excellent site of Makhsusabad, where news of all the four quarters of the Subah could be easily procurable, and which, like the pupil of the eye, was situate in the centre of the important places of the Subah."<sup>18</sup> Murshid Kuli Khan settled at Makhsudabad probably at the end of 1702 or beginning of 1703.<sup>19</sup>

No record remains of the doings of Manik Chand during the progress of these events. His banking house was situated on the river-side not far from the long walls which enclosed the Lal-

17. The Diwan was obliged to comply with all written orders for money from that officer for the service of government. Stewart, *History of Bengal*, [p. 352].

18. *Riyazu-s-Salatin* (English translation) pp. 247-252. Stewart, *History of Bengal*, [p. 356].

19. Stewart says 1702-3, other writers 1704, Stewart seems to be correct. According to the *Riyazu-s-Salatin* (p. 252) after Murshid Kuli Khan had been at Murshidabad for a year he started for the Imperial camp which was at that time in the Deccan. The English records under date March 27th, 1704, speak of the "Duan's Company" and Dacca as if they were two separate places and the word "company" seems to imply that the Diwan was travelling (Wilson, *Annals*, Vol. I. p. 247). On June 14th, 1704 the Diwan was on his return from Orissa through which he would pass on his way back from the Deccan (Wilson, *Annals*, Vol. I. p. 252). It appears then that Murshid Kuli Khan started for the Deccan some time before March 27th, 1704.

bagh—the fort and palace of the Viceroy.<sup>20</sup> Perhaps even at this early period he was the Government banker and treasurer. Perhaps Murshid Kuli Khan had already found out the value of his advice and had consulted him in the financial reforms he had instituted and the removal of the Diwani to Murshidabad. But this is conjecture. What is certain is that when Murshid Kuli Khan with all the officials of the Diwani left Dacca for Murshidabad Manik Chand accompanied him and settled at Mohimpore on the banks of the Bhagirathi less than two miles from the palace of Murshid Kuli Khan. The present head of the family, the ninth in descent from Manik Chand, still resides at Mohimpore not far from the ruins of the home of his ancestors.

The historians who have dealt with the times of Murshid Kuli Khan seldom find it necessary to refer to the fortunes of Manik Chand at Murshidabad. The *Riyazu-s-salatin* makes a slight, perplexing and inaccurate allusion to the family. Modern writers have a tendency to ascribe to Manik Chand from the very first the eminent position which he undoubtedly occupied before his death in 1714. But there are indications that Manik Chand's growth in wealth and influence was, as might naturally be expected, a gradual process and coincided with the rise in fortune of Murshid Kuli Khan.

• At the end of the first year's administration of the finances of Bengal at Murshidabad Murshid Kuli Khan went to the Deccan to give the Emperor an account of his stewardship. The Emperor loaded him with favours and sent him back to Bengal as Deputy Nazim to the Prince as well as Diwan in the provinces of Bengal and Orissa. It was at this time that Murshid Kuli Khan changed the name of the city of Maksudabad to Murshidabad. He also improved the city and by establishing the mint there deprived Dacca of its last claim to be considered the capital of Bengal and transferred the title to Murshidabad.<sup>21</sup>

20. "A Panorama of the City of Dacca" in the Palace Library at Murshidabad gives the site of the "Dacca Branch Banking House of Jugget Seth." This was no doubt, as assumed above, the original house established by Manik Chand. It was rumoured that a large amount of treasure was buried under the house but when an excavation was made only two measures of oil were found. The "Panorama" is not dated. It was printed and lithographed in London.

21. *Riyazu-s-Salatin*, pp. 254, 255.



Visitors to the home of the Seths at Mohimapore are shown the ruins of the old Murshidabad mint. But the absolute control of the Seths over the mint seems to have come at a latter date and though its establishment at Murshidabad "was rendered easy by the command of specie possessed by the banker"<sup>22</sup> Manik Chand does not appear to have had, at this period, the superintendence and management in his own hands. Tradition says that the first mint was situated in the Killa Nizamat near the place where the Imambara now stands and the ghat going down to the river is still known as the Mint Ghat.<sup>23</sup>

The Consultations of the President and Council at Calcutta shed some light on this point. The English had mints of their own in the other two presidencies but not in Bengal. One of the chief requests in the petition presented to the Emperor Farruksiyyar by the Surman embassy was for permission to have their bullion coined into rupces at the Murshidabad mint "without let or molestation"<sup>24</sup> But while Surman was at Delhi they tried through Samuel Feake, the chief of the factory at Cassimbazar, to come to an arrangement with Murshid Kuli Khan. When Feake and his Council visited Murshid Kuli Khan in August 1715 they were received civilly and "upon their demanding the freedom of the Mint and that they might coin siccaes He told them they should." The promise was not fulfilled. In March 1716 Murshid Kuli Khan "had started from his Bargain" and when he began to harass their trade at Cassimbazar it was found necessary to accommodate matters. Feake thought that Rs. 25,000 would "make up the business" of which Nawab Jafar Khan (as Murshid Kuli Khan was generally called at this time) was to have Rs. 15,000, his Diwan, Ekram Khan Rs. 5,000 and "the Muttsuddies"<sup>25</sup> Rogonundun Droga<sup>26</sup> of the Mint, etc. Rs. 5,000."

For months the payment of these sums was evaded and then, in May 1717, came the news from Delhi that a farman had been obtained from Farrukhsiyar granting, among other

22. Hunter's Statistical Account of Bengal, Vol. ix, p. 253.

23. The author is indebted for this information to Khondkar Fazl Rubbee, Khan Bahadur, Diwan to the Nawab Bahadur of Murshidabad.

24. Wilson's Early Annals of the English in Bengal, Vol. II, Part 2, p. 61.

25. Accountants.

things, the use of the mint at Murshidabad. The President and Council met and resolved as follows:—"It being necessary to make some Publick Rejoycing upon the Advice We have received from Mr. Surman and that all the Conutry may know Our Phirmauns are actually in Mr. Surman's Possession. Agreed That next Wednesday We make a Public Dinner for all the Companys Servants and a loud Noise with Our Cannon and conclude the day with Bonfires and other Demonstrations of Joy which we know will be taken notice of in the Wacka and other publick News Papers." Their joy was premature. On July 1st they sent 20 chests of treasure to be coined at Murshidabad but Feake could not get an order for the mint "because Jaffercaun's<sup>27</sup> Chief Muttsuddy, Ruggoonundum seems to be in a dying Condition and till he recovers or is dead they cannot tell who to apply themselves to." In the end they visited the Nawab and showed him a copy of the farman. The Nawab took it, read it and then bluntly refused them the use of the mint.<sup>28</sup> .

It is evident then that up to 1717 Ruggoonundum was the darogha or, as we should say, Master of the Mint<sup>29</sup> and if apart from business relations, the bankers of Murshidabad had any connection with the Mint the English at Cassimbazar were not aware of it. It was probably after the death of Ruggoonundum that the mint was transferred to the house of the Seths.

Aurangzeb died in 1707 and a contest arose between his sons for the throne. Prince Azimu-sh-shan had for some years made Patna the headquarters of his government and now he left that city to go to the help of his father, Aurungzeb's eldest son, who became Emperor with the title of Bahadur Shah. The accession of an Emperor was a time of great anxiety to all provincial governors and officials for they could not feel secure until they had been confirmed in office by the new Emperor. A family tradition states, and there is nothing improbable in the statement that Manik Chand helped Murshid Kuli Khan

26. Darogha.

27. Jafar Khan.

28. Wilson's *Early Annals of the English in Bengal*, Vol. II, Part 1, pp. 225, 228, 233, 238, 242, 246, 258, 268, 274, 275.

29. Hobson Jobson, p. 297.

to purchase his confirmation in office after the death of Aurungzeb. In 1713 Farrukhsiyar made Murshid Kuli Khan Governor as well as Diwan of Bengal and Orissa and shortly afterwards Behar was added.

Murshid Kuli Khan was the most able and the most successful of all the Muhammadan rulers of Bengal. He preserved order throughout the provinces with an army of 2,000 cavalry and 4,000 infantry. So strict was he in the administration of justice that he is said to have put his own son to death for an infringement of the law. "The names of freebooters, night-marauders and assassins were blotted out from the annals of the Bengal satrapy, and the dwellers, both of towns and villages, lived in perfect peace and comfort." He remitted to the Emperor at Delhi an annual tribute of from one krór thirty lacs to one krór fifty lacs but his inhuman treatment of zamindars and others who failed in their payments, is said to have made him detested throughout the province. He was certainly detested by the English whom he hurt where merchants are most sensitive—their pockets.<sup>30</sup>

The payments of the zamindars and other collectors of the revenue were made into the banking house of Manik Chand and it was through him that the annual tribute was remitted to Delhi. During the government of Murshid Kuli Khan the treasure was conveyed to Delhi in waggons in charge of an armed escort. Obviously when times were troublous, there was a great risk that the convoy would not reach its destination. Azimu-sh-shan seized the tribute in 1707 when the war between the sons of Aurungzeb broke out. Again, in 1712, when there was a similar fight for the succession, it was captured by Farrukhsiyar<sup>31</sup> and in 1720 it was delayed for a long time at Patna owing to a revolt at Allahabad.<sup>32</sup> All these dangers were avoided when Manik Chand (according to the family tradition) but more probably his successor remitted the tribute by means of drafts drawn by him on the family firm at Delhi.

30. Riyazu-s-Salatin, pp. 257, 259, 262, 278. Stewart, History of Bengal, pp. 370, 372. Holwell, "Interesting Historical Events" (1766), p. 52.

31. Seir-ul-Mutaqherin (1789), Vol. I, pp. 5, 50.

32. William Irvine, The Later Mughals, in the Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal, 1908, pp. 512, 519.

## 3.

It would have been strange if the wealthiest Indian banker and merchant of his time had had no dealings with the great Company of English merchants in Bengal and so one is not surprised to find in the Consultations of the Council at Calcutta references to Manik Chand and to his sister's son, Fateh Chand, whom, having no children of his own, Manik Chand adopted, and made his heir. The first connection of Manik Chand with the English of which there is any record occurred in 1706 and has reference to the Company's trade in Bengal.

By letters patent of former viceroys and farmans of Aurungzeb the English claimed the right of trading in Bengal, free of customs, subject to an annual payment of Rs. 3,000. In actual practice during the early years of the 18th century they were the victims of endless exactions from all the officers of the government high and low. If they did not pay their trade was stopped. A favourite method of extortion was to stop the saltpetre boats on their way down the river from Patna. This was a serious matter, for the Directors were demanding large quantities of saltpetre in all their letters from England. So the usual order given by the Council was "Clear the boats at any price." On one occasion they had to pay Rs. 14,000 to Prince Farrukhsiyar who had stopped the boats at Rajmahal. In 1704 the Governor of Hugli and his subordinate officers down to the munshi,<sup>33</sup> fifteen in number, were given presents of European goods, and then three of them threatened to obstruct the trade unless their presents were augmented by Rs. 1,100 in cash. Murshid Kuli Khan's terms were Rs. 30,000 for a sanad<sup>34</sup> granting the Company freedom to trade without hindrance. The Company were willing to give Rs. 20,000 but Murshid Kuli Khan would not lower his terms. "We have received advice from Mannick Chund",<sup>35</sup> runs the Consultation dated July 18th, 1706, "that the King's Diwan has ordered his naib<sup>36</sup> at Patna to permit our business

33. Writer or Secretary.

34. A diploma, patent, or deed of grant by the government of an office, privilege or right. Hobson Jobson, p. 871.

35. Manik Chand.

36. Deputy.

to pass as formerly also that he will give his sanad for our free trade in Bengal upon paying him piscash<sup>37</sup> of Rs. 30,000." At length, in January 1707 William Bugden was sent to re-establish the factory at Cassimbazar and took the money for the sanad with him which he was authorised to pay as soon as the document was in his hands. Before this happened the death of Aurungzeb threw everything into confusion and Bugden was ordered back to Calcutta with the money.<sup>38</sup>

In spite of the payment of large sums of money in 1708 Murshid Kuli Khan renewed his demands in 1711. Robert Hedges, Chief of the factory at Cassimbazar, informed the Council that the Diwan "will come to no terms under Rs. 45,000 for the Prince and Rs. 15,000 for King under which sums he will by no means grant us his Sunnud." In addition "some thousand of Rupees as contingent charges to several officers" would be necessary. These demands made the Council desperate. On July 30th they ordered Hedges to inform Murshid Kuli Khan that if he would not grant them a sanad for Rs. 30,000 and in addition help them to obtain a farman from the Emperor they would abandon the factory at Cassimbazar, stop all Mughal ships from passing Fort William and acquaint the Emperor how their trade was being impeded. On the 6th August they reiterated their orders to Hedges declaring "that if the Duan will not comply we are resolved to turn our faces to fortune". A week later Fateh Chand, Manik Chand's nephew, appeared on the scene. The Council direct Hedges not to trouble about buying goods at Cassimbazar as, seeing no other way out of their troubles, they have made an arrangement with "Futtichundsaw"<sup>39</sup> an Eminent Merchant being now with us and offering to provide our whole Investment now ordered at Cassimbazar for an allowance of  $6\frac{1}{4}$  per cent. he standing to all bad debts at the Aurungs<sup>40</sup> and our goods to be delivered here

37. Peshcash In the old English records this word is most generally used in the sense of a present to a great man. Hobson Jobson, p. 701.

38. Wilson, *Early Annals of the English in Bengal*, Vol. I, pp. 222, 254, 258, 259, 263, 266, 268, 274, 277-280, 307.

39. Fatehchand Saha.

40. A place where goods are manufactured, a depot for such goods. Hobson Jobson, p. 40.

in Calcutta. It being so late in the Year we judge this to be the best and only method that appears to secure these goods for our homeward bound Shipping". On August 21st the Council received a letter from Hedges approving of what they had done and adding "that he could not have bought goods himself at Cassimbazar, for, if any merchant had supplied the English, he certainly would have been punished by the Duan, who still continues obstinate about the Sunnud". So on the 23rd August the agreement with Fateh Chand Saha for the goods from Cassimbazar was drawn up and signed. In October, when Hedges had loaded all his boats and was about to abandon the factory at Cassimbazar, Murshid Kuli Khan became more reasonable. He offered to give a sanad passing all the Company's business free in the provinces of Bengal, Behar and Orissa and to procure a farman from the Emperor for Rs. 30,000 cash down on receipt of the sanad and a note for Rs. 22,500 to be paid on receipt of the farman. The Council met and agreed "that since the Duan's interest is very great at Court. . . . We immediately write to Mr. Hedges, etc. at Cassimbazar to comply with him on the foregoing Terms all the Honble. Compos. effects having to pass through his Jurisdiction who undoubtedly will impede Them very much if we don't agree with him".<sup>41</sup>

In 1712 we catch a glimpse of Manik Chand and Fateh Chand in full durbar at Murshidabad. The times were critical. The Emperor Bahadur Shah was dead and his four sons were fighting for the throne. Murshid Kuli Khan had recognised Azimu-sh-shan as Emperor. He had coined money in his name and caused the prayer for his prosperity to be read in the mosque when he attended public worship. Then a report, which was perfectly true, came to Murshidabad that Azimu-sh-shan had been defeated and slain in battle. Murshid Kuli Khan saw clearly that it was essential to keep the provinces quiet until he had made his position secure. He decided not only to suppress but also to contradict the rumour. No one in Murshidabad was in a better position to obtain reliable news than Manik Chand and Fateh Chand. There can be no doubt that they had informed Murshid Kuli Khan of the true state of affairs but he

41. Wilson, *Early Annals of the English in Bengal*, Vol. I, pp. 296, 298, 299, Vol. II, Part I, pp. 19-21, 23, 28, 29.

resolved to announce that they had brought him the news of Azimu-sh-shan's success and to bestow marks of honour upon them for the welcome tidings. "The Duan", wrote Mr. Hedges from Cassimbazar, "to make the report of Mahmud Azeems<sup>42</sup> being King to be credited, has Presented Monickchund with an Elephant and Seerpaw<sup>43</sup> and Phuttechund with a horse and Seerpaw, And Declares if any Person Shall Presume to Say he did not believe Mahmud Azeem was King, he Should Suffer death and have his House Plundered, which Declaration is Yet a Terror to the Merchants that they dare not disclose the Contents of their Private Letters". In the evening Hedges paid Murshid Kuli Khan a visit. They talked for two hours "mostly of war and battles and on his going away . . . he bid him rest Satisfied that all things will be well. Take Care of Your Factory and go in Peace". But he would not accept Hedges' congratulatory present, nor would he say that he had heard any news at all "for Monickchunds mouth must spread all the Lyes he would have reported".<sup>44</sup>

To appreciate the danger and difficulty of Murshid Kuli Khan's position at this crisis we have only to read the steps taken by the English at Calcutta at the same time. When the news of the Emperor's death was received the Council passed the following resolution:—"Considering the great Confusions and Troubles that may arise in Bengal during the Inter Regnum, Agreed that we Order all our Officers of this Garrison to be constantly in a Readiness, and to See all under them be ready, And that Ammunition be put into the proper places, that are for that purpose on all Bastions, And that we keep an Extraordinary lookout, And that the Gunner mount the Mortars, And some great Guns be placed on the Curtains, Also that the Buxie<sup>45</sup> lay in good Store of all sorts of grain, and Provisions ; As for the soldiers we have now about 200 besides Officers,

42. Muhammad Azimu-sh-Shan.

43. Sar-a-pa, a complete suit, presented as a 'Khilat or dress of honour, by the sovereign or his representative. Hobson Jobson, p. 808.

44. Wilson, Early Annals of the English in Bengal, Vol. II, Part 1, pp. 45, 47, 48

45. "In the early days of the Council of Fort William we find the title Buxee applied to a European Civil Officer, through whom payments were made."—Hobson Jobson, p. 134.

amongst which are about 140 stout Europeans, which with the Company's Servants and Freemen of this Place And the Gun-roome Crew, We think will on any Occasion be sufficient to Defend this Garrison".<sup>46</sup>

The Consultations also prove that the Company's servants, or at least one of them, had private transactions with Manik Chand. A Mr. Josiah Chitty, the Company's paymaster and storekeeper in 1710, was found guilty of misappropriating the Company's cash and dismissed the service. But this was not all. Chitty had contracted large debts with Indian merchants and although by February 1712, he had made good the money belonging to the Company he could not leave for England until he had satisfied his creditors. In February 1713 he made over to the Council a bond for 13,804 pagodas due to him from a merchant at Madras, for the payment of his creditors. In May he sold his jewels which realised Rs. 22,611 while his debts at that time amounted to Rs. 68,130. The Consultations relate how Chitty was, at length, allowed to leave for England "Bernareseat informing us that Monickchundsaw and the other Creditors of Mr. Josiah Chitty are willing to let him go for England upon his paying Rs. 7,000 to Monickchund and he the said Bernareseat<sup>47</sup> engaging himself to endemnify the Company from the clamour of Monickchund and Mr. Chittys other Creditors in case they or any of them complain to the Government and pretend that the debts he owes them is due from the Company. We do agree that an order be given to Captain Winter to receive Mr. Chitty a Passenger on his ship the "King William" to England". It is evident that Manik Chand was a person of importance and one whose complaints would be

46. Wilson, *Early Annals of the English in Bengal*, Vol. II, Part 1, p. 44.

47. Varanasi Sett (Wilson). These Setts of Calcutta have been confused with the Seths of Murshidabad by the Rev. J. Long in his "Selections from Unpublished Records of Government"—p. 9 (note) and elsewhere. Four families of Bysacks and one of Setts left Satgaon in the middle of the 16th century, founded the settlement of Govindpur on the site of the present Fort William and established the Sutanuti market on the north of Calcutta where they did business with the Portuguese. Many years after they came into connection with the English. Varanasi Sett was the Company's broker, the most important of their Indian servants (Wilson's *Early Annals*, etc., Vol. 1, pp. 128, 137, 199, 200).



*attended to by the Government. As soon as he is satisfied Chitty may go. The claims of the other merchants had not been fully satisfied as late as 1716.*<sup>48</sup>

## 4.

As Manik Chand became the most famous of the sons of Hiranand Saho he is usually placed first when they are enumerated but it is not certain that he was the eldest of them. The remaining six sons were Golabchand, Nanakchand, Ameechand, Sadanand, Gobordhandas, and Dipchand.<sup>49</sup> They do not appear in the pages of historians. The only memory of them handed down in the family is that they founded banking houses in various parts of northern India and the transactions of these banks, have, for the most part, perished with the books in which they were recorded. But the records of one great company of merchants—the East India Company—are still carefully preserved and from that source it is established that Sadanand settled at Delhi and there had transactions with Kwajah Sarhad, the Armenian, who accompanied John Surman on the famous embassy despatched by the Company to the Emperor Farrukhsiyar in 1714. These transactions were, years afterwards, to cause trouble between the Company and Sadanand's son, Lalji, as will be recorded in its due place.<sup>50</sup>

The Surman embassy travelled through some of the principal cities of northern India and made a long stay at Delhi and we have a record of their money transactions in all these places. If, as was no doubt the case, the sons of Hiranand Saho had banking establishments of note in these cities it would probably have happened that the Embassy came into contact with them. A study of the Diary, Consultations and Letters of the members of the embassy reveals the following facts.

To furnish the embassy with money the President and Council at Calcutta gave Surman letters of credit addressed apparently to two bankers at Delhi named Lalvihari and Jugalprasad. These letters of credit, however, proved useless. "We

48. Wilson, *Early Annals of the English in Bengal*, Vol. II, Part 1, pp. 16, 40, 105, 132, 160, 241.

49. Note supplied by the present head of the family.

50. *Infra*.

have met with nothing but denials'', they write on July 20th 1715, "Lollbehary refusing to let us have any money but on very unreasonable conditions, the other Joogurpursaud remains in Agra, . . . . we have wrote to him but with little hopes of Success We hope your Honour etc. a's first letters will remedy this disappointment''.<sup>51</sup> Fresh letters of credit were accordingly sent and the embassy appears to have obtained money from the factors of Gololchund Saw giving bills of exchange drawn on the President and Council at Calcutta for on October 6th they informed the Council that Gololchund Saw's agent was complaining that the Council had accepted the bills but not paid them.<sup>52</sup> They had no further occasion to borrow money till April 9th 1717. On that date they gave a bill of exchange drawn on the President and Council for Rs. 25,000 "payable 70 days after date to Sawbiparry or Order being for value received here from Murlidar Bawsein Decanny Ray Factors to Kissoray Kissenchund''.<sup>53</sup> The embassy, then, first borrowed from the factors of Gololchundsaw and next of Kissoray Kissenchund.

On July 5th they draw two bills on the Company—one for Rs. 12,000 and the other for Rs. 13,000—for value received at Delhi from the factors of Kissoray Kissenchund and write two letters<sup>54</sup> to the Council informing them of the transactions. But in their next letter,<sup>55</sup> dated July 19th, written from Barapulah after their departure from Delhi, they state "We wrote your Honour etc., the 7th June. . . . we also wrote your Honour etc., two letters of the 5th instant, to accompany two bills of Exchange, one for 13,000 and one for 12,000 Siccas then drawn, payable to Sawbiparry for the value received here from Gololchundsaw's factors''. It follows, therefore, that either a mistake has been made in this letter or the ambassadors could say that they had borrowed of the factors of Gololchundsaw or the factors of Kissoray Kissenchund indifferently, that these were in fact the same persons and represented

51. Wilson, *Early Annals of the English in Bengal*, Vol. II, Part 2, pp. 53, 54.

52. *Ibid*, p. 73.

53. *Ibid*, p. 184.

54. *Ibid*, Letters xxxv and xxxvi, p. 209.

55. *Ibid*, Letter xxxvii, p. 213.

the same firm. The bills certainly came into the hands of Gololchund who sold them to the house of Manik Chand. Gololchund himself came to see the ambassadors at Patna and complained that the bills had been subjected to a discount of *two per cent and requested them to obtain a statement from Manik Chand's factory at Calcutta "importing that they have received the Bill in full as it was drawn"*.<sup>56</sup>

Again, the ambassadors informed the Council that they had appointed a certain Mittersein to be the English agent at Delhi and had left six months' pay for him in the hands of Gololchund-saw's factors to whom all letters for Mittersein were to be addressed<sup>57</sup> while in their Consultation on the matter they agreed "that Mr. John Surman pay 600 rupees to Murlidar Bawsein. Decannyrays Factory with orders to pay Mittersein 100 rupees per month".<sup>58</sup> That is they resolved to pay the money to Kissoray Kissenchund's factors and then informed the Council they were paying it into the hands of the factors of Gololchundsaw.

At Agra the ambassadors obtain money from Kissoray Kissenchund himself,<sup>59</sup> at Korah Jehanabad from his factors while their letter to the Council from the same place is delivered to Gololchund's factors to be forwarded<sup>60</sup> and a lame camel is left with the same factors to be sold.<sup>61</sup> At Allahabad they again obtain money from Kissoray Kissenchund's factors.<sup>62</sup> At Benares they had no money transactions.<sup>63</sup>

From the foregoing facts there emerges into tangible form the existence of a great banking firm with its headquarters at Patna under Gololchund, its principal branch at Agra under

56. Wilson, *Early Annals of the English in Bengal*, Vol. II, Part 2, p. 234. The words of the letter are "He (Gololchundsaw) desires Your Honour, etc. to take a writing from his Factory there to Gololchundsaw's here importing, etc." "His" apparently refers to Manik Chand and "they" to the people at Manik Chand's factory.

57. *Ibid*, p. 215

58. *Ibid*, p. 218.

59. *Ibid*, p. 224.

60. *Ibid*, p. 227.

61. *Ibid*, p. 238.

62. *Ibid*, p. 231.

63. *Ibid*, p. 232.

Kissoray Kissenchund and other branches at Korah Jehanabad and Allahabad and no doubt at other places which they ambassadors did not visit.

When we seek to connect this banking house with the house at Murshidabad a difficulty presents itself. Gololchund, or Gulalchand as the name would be transliterated now, was not one of the sons of Hiranand Saho. It may be, however, that a mistake has been made and that we ought to read Gulabchand who was a brother of Manik Chand. Gulal is a very rare, if not an entirely unknown name for an Indian while Gulab is a fairly common name. It occurs again as the name of one of Manik Chand's descendants. In fact most Indians would naturally be inclined to read Gulab instead of Gulal unless they looked at the name carefully. Curiously enough, in the facsimiles of the manuscript given in Dr. Wilson's book<sup>64</sup> the b's might easily be mistaken for l's and it might be supposed that a mistake had been made in transcribing the name. A reference, however, to the manuscript at the India Office in London proves that this is not the case. But no doubt the original documents in the handwriting of Hugh Barker, the Secretary to the embassy, were kept at Calcutta and copies sent to London. A copyist whose b's and l's are almost alike might easily have made the mistake of writing Golol for Golob. The English at this time were very careless and eccentric in spelling Indian names.

Then it has been seen that the first Delhi bankers to whom the members of the embassy were given letters of credit refused to have dealings with them. In such a difficulty the President and Council would naturally have turned to the head of the house at Murshidabad who was known to have great influence at Delhi and the latter would just as naturally have recommended his brother's firm to them in which he had, no doubt, a financial interest.

Again one of the transactions of the embassy with "Gololchundsaw" is linked up with Manik Chand's factory at Calcutta and though Manik Chand himself was dead at this time there

64. Early Annals of the English in Bengal, Vol. II, Part 2. The facsimiles of the manuscript face pages 42 and 84.

is evidence to prove that for some years after his death the Murshidabad house was still known as Manik Chand's house.<sup>65</sup>

Mittersein, the name of the man who was appointed to watch over the interests of the Company in all the three presidencies at Delhi and who was to be paid through the agency of "Gololchund's" factors, is transliterated by Dr. Wilson as Mittra Sen. Now Rai Mittra Sen was an elder brother of Fateh Chand, the adopted son of Manik Chand and was killed in the massacre of the people at Delhi which was carried out by the order of Nadir Shah in 1739.<sup>66</sup>

Lastly it must be borne in mind that no new discovery has been made in the essential fact. That Manik Chand and his brothers established banking houses throughout northern India is one of the traditions preserved in the family to this day. What is new is the attempt to prove that these banking houses were actually endowed with "a local habitation and a name" and what is presented for the first time is a glimpse of them actually engaged in the transaction of their business.

## 5.

The Consultations of the Council at Calcutta contain no reference to Manik Chand after the settlement of Mr. Chitty's debts. Manik Chand was near his end but before his death he received a mark of honour from the Emperor Farrukhsiyar.

The Emperor Farrukhsiyar had resided at Murshidabad during the lifetime of his grandfather, Bahadur Shah. He had lived on terms of friendship with Murshid Kuli Khan<sup>67</sup> and must have become acquainted with the Nawab's chief adviser and his adopted son, Fateh Chand. There may have been financial relations between the future Emperor and Manik Chand at this time but, if so, no record remains of them. Events, however, soon occurred which placed Farrukhsiyar under heavy pecuniary obligations to the bankers of Murshidabad.

At the death of Bahadur Shah Murshid Kuli Khan recognised Azimu-sh-shan, Farrukhsiyar's father, as Emperor but

65. There is an instance of this as late as the year 1765.

66. Ghose, "Modern History of the Indian Chief, Rajas, etc." Part II, p. 457.

67. Stewart, "History of Bengal," p. 384.

when that prince was slain in battle he made his peace with his competitor for empire, Jahandar Shah, refused to take up the cause of Farrukhsiyar and hinted that it would be advisable for him to leave Murshidabad. Farrukhsiyar with his household and a few attendants proceeded to Patna and threw himself on the protection of Syed Husain Ali Khan whom his father had made Governor of Behar. After a struggle between self-interest and gratitude Husain Ali Khan promised Farrukhsiyar his aid and also enlisted in the prince's service his brother Syed Abdullah Khan, the Governor of Allahabad.<sup>68</sup> These two Syed brothers play a great part in the history of the next eight years.

Gratitude was a somewhat rare virtue in those days in India and if Farrukhsiyar had trusted only to the support of those who had received benefits from his father he would never have become Emperor. But an Imperial Prince who was a good paymaster could always be sure that hosts of soldiers of fortune would flock to his standard. As a rule they fought bravely but if their paymaster happened to be killed in the fight their obligations were at an end and they fled from the field.<sup>69</sup> Farrukhsiyar's first necessity, then, was money. Accordingly Husain Ali Khan "assembled the bankers and principal men of the city: and having borrowed from them large sums of money, proportionable to their circumstances, for which he gave bonds signed by the Prince, and payable on his having subdued his enemies, he soon assembled a good army."<sup>70</sup> Later, in spite of the remonstrances of Husain Ali Khan, Farrukhsiyar levied forced contributions on the merchants and drove all the rich men out of the city.<sup>71</sup>

Manik Chand had a branch house at Patna which seems to have been in charge of Fateh Chand. Besides being the home of his parents his own family lived at Patna and his eldest son was born there. Even when he became the head of the house

68. Ibid, pp. 284-387.

69. There are twelve instances of this from the first volume of the *Seir Mutaquerin* alone, pp. 34, 52, 53, 60, 102, 168, 214, 293, 496, 501, 508, 144.

70. *Seir Mutaquerin*, Vol. I, p. 50.

71. Wilson, *Early Annals of the English in Bengal*, Vol. II, Part I, pp. 80, 86.

at Murshidabad after the death of Manik Chand we find him at Patna in March 1715.<sup>72</sup> It is a probability almost amounting to a certainty that Fateh Chand, as Manik Chand's agent, was one of the contributors to the loan and one of the rich men that left the city. For when Farrukhsiyar on his march to Delhi came to Benares he raised "a loan of one kror of rupees on the security of the Empire from Nagar Set and other leading bankers of Benares."<sup>73</sup> Another passage from the historian just quoted throws light on the identity of this mysterious Nagar Set. He tells us that "on Jafar Khan's representation to the Emperor, Nagar Set's uncle and agent, Fateh Chand Sahu, whose services had won the good graces of the Khan, was invested with the title of Jagat Seth, and appointed to the office of Treasurer General of Bengal."<sup>74</sup> Now it is incredible that Fateh Chand was the agent of the son of one of his own brothers or sisters while he was undoubtedly the agent of Manik Chand. Again, Nagar was the name of Hiranand Saho's birth-place in Rajputana. Perhaps Manik Chand, too, had been born there. After the death of Hiranand Saho, Manik Chand was the most likely member of the family to receive such a name. Indeed Stewart, who used the book of the historian quoted above in compiling his history of Bengal very naturally corrects his authority on this point. "At his (Murshid Kuli Khan's) recommendation," says Stewart, "(Farrukhsiyar) appointed the nephew of Manickchund to be the Imperial treasurer, or banker, with the title of Juggeet Seat."<sup>75</sup>

Stewart, while correcting one error, has retained another. It was not the Emperor Farrukhsiyar who invested Fateh Chand with the title of Jagat Seth. Another Emperor was to do this as will be told in its place. It was Manik Chand who was rewarded by the Emperor Farrukhsiyar for the financial aid which had contributed so materially to the success of his cause. A farman, issued in the third year of his reign and still in the possession of the head of the family at Murshidabad, declared that Manik Chand had been elevated with the award of the title of Seth and that it was proper and to be deemed impera-

72. Ibid, Vol. II, Part 2, p. 24.

73. Riyazu-s-salatin, p. 269.

74. Ibid, pp. 273, 274.

75. History of Bengal, p. 393.

tive "that the civil and ministerial officers and the secretaries of the present and future should designate him as Seth."<sup>76</sup>

According to "Hobson-Jobson" (p. 813) the word "seth" is derived from the Sanscrit "srestha" meaning "best" or "chief," "sresthi," "the chief of a corporation, a merchant or banker." In the Company's records we frequently find the word attached to the names of their Indian merchants, e.g., Bernasseseat and in course of time it was applied to these merchants as a body. On many occasions in later years, we read that the Seats or Seets were summoned to the Council Chamber to discuss with the President and Council the price of goods. But the word had never hitherto been used by the English when referring to the house at Murshidabad. In their case another word—saho (shaw, saw)—meaning "merchant" or "banker" had been used, e.g. Monickchundsaw Futtichund-saw, and when the records begin to apply the word to the bankers of Murshidabad it is not, as a rule, added to the name as it was in the case of their own merchants. We seldom find in the records "Futtichundseat" but "Seat Futtichund." In this case the word was not a mere appellation but a title, conferred by the Emperor and carrying with it a certain rank. What that rank was cannot be ascertained with precision but it was certainly such as befitted the Nawab's chief adviser. One privilege which was said to have been conferred by the Emperor on Manik Chand's family at this time, a privilege which they shared with the family of the Nawab alone, was the right of wearing gold ornaments on the feet. The Emperor is said to have presented Manik Chand's wife with a golden ornament which was, and still is, held in the greatest veneration by the female members of the family.<sup>77</sup>

Manik Chand lived only a short time after receiving his title from the Emperor. He died on the 10th day of the new moon of the month of Magh in the Samvat year 1771 (1714 A.D.)<sup>78</sup> His remains were placed in Manikbagh, a garden on the opposite side of the river Bhagirathi which has long since been washed away by the river. He had no children but, as

76. From a translation of the Emperor's farman.

77. Note supplied by the present head of the family.

78. Ibid.



has been related before, adopted Fateh Chand, the son of his sister and Rai Uday Chand, and Fateh Chand succeeded him as the head of the house at Murshidabad.

Manik Chand had raised this house to wealth and greatness. He had branches at Calcutta, Dacca, Patna and Benares. A few years after his death mention is made of a branch at Hugli which may well have been established by Manik Chand and there were probably houses in other places of which no record remains. In the case of Delhi there is a doubt. It has been asserted that Fateh Chand was the head of the firm at Delhi at the time of his adoption by Manik Chand and that Manik Chand remitted the tribute of Bengal to Delhi by drafts on his house there. But with regard to the former statement it is improbable that a boy held such a post and even if he had, the house would probably have belonged to one of Manik Chand's brothers. After his adoption we have seen that Fateh Chand was connected with Patna. Again all the evidence shows that in the time of Manik Chand the tribute of Bengal was remitted to Delhi in specie under an armed guard. As late as 1726 we read that "the King's treasure is ready and only waits for a guard which is expected in a few days."<sup>79</sup> It is not till 1728, when Shuja-ud-daula was Nawab, that we find it recorded that a part of the tribute was remitted to Delhi by means of Bills of Exchange.<sup>80</sup> It would appear, therefore, that the house at Delhi was founded by Fateh Chand. There is no reason to doubt, however, that Manik Chand had acquired influence at the Court of Delhi and he had certainly received marks of the Emperor's favour.

In Bengal the influence of Manik Chand was almost as great as that of the Governor. He was the right-hand man of the Nawab in all his financial reforms and in his private affairs. The establishment of the mint at Murshidabad was due to him and, wherever it was situated and whoever was in nominal control, there is not doubt that Manik Chand's influence over it was paramount. A few years after his death the chief of the English factory at Cassimbazar declared that Manik Chand's adopted son had the sole use of the mint and

79. India Office Records, Consultation, Monday, 6th June, 1726.

80. Ibid, Consultation, Monday, 17th June, 1728.\*

not another banker or merchant dared to buy or coin a rupee's worth of silver.<sup>81</sup> He was the Treasurer of the Government and the private hoards of the Nawab were deposited with him. It was said that on the Nawab's death five krors of rupees remained unpaid by the Murshidabad house but this was a figment of later times. The zamindars and other collectors of the revenue made their payment to Manik Chand. "There were in those days no treasuries scattered over the country in the several districts. The zamindars collected the revenue and remitted it to the viceregal treasury at Murshidabad. Every year at the time of *Punya*, or annual settlement of the revenue, a custom introduced by Murshid Kuli Khan, all the zamindars assembled at the bank of the Seths, in order to settle their accounts, adjust the difference of *batta* or discount, and negotiate for a fresh supply of funds."<sup>82</sup> In the time of Siraj-ud-daula the *Punya* appears to have been held in the month of April and to have lasted a month. That it was a great event of the year is clear from the fact that Siraj-ud-daula pleaded it as an excuse for neglecting to attend to matters in which the English were interested.<sup>83</sup> From the time of Manik Chand it may be said that "the banker and his descendants were recognised as permanent members of the Nawab's council, their influence was of chief importance in deciding the result of every dynastic revolution, and they were always in constant communication with the ministers of the Delhi court."<sup>84</sup>

Manik Chand's wife—or rather his principal wife for he appears to have had two—survived her husband for twenty seven years. She was a remarkable woman and when she died the priest of the family wrote a poem in her praise in which he relates her parentage, her marriage to Manik Chand, how, when Manik Chand died, she went on a pilgrimage to the holy hill of Parasnath and how she passed the remainder

81. Wilson, *Early Annals of the English in Bengal*, pp. 369 of proof sheets of the portion of Vol. III (Jan., 1718—May, 1722) that was in type at the time of Dr. Wilson's death. This volume was not issued. (This volume has been published now. S. C. S.)

82. Hunter, *Statistical Account of Bengal*, Vol. ix, p. 256.

83. Hill, *Bengal in 1756-57*, Vol. II, pp. 294, 355.

84. Hunter, *Statistical Account of Bengal*, Vol. ix, p. 254.

of her life in fasting, prayer and the practice of every kind of austerity. Noticeable too, is the interest she took in the welfare of the Oswals whom Manik Chand encouraged to settle in Murshidabad. At one time it is said there were as many as 500 Oswals in Murshidabad whose dwellings were clustered together near the house of the Seths and this colony received from the inhabitants of Murshidabad the name of Mahajantoli. When the fortunes of the Seths decayed the members of this settlement gradually drifted away but the presence of rich Oswals at Azimganj and Baluchar in the neighbourhood of Murshidabad is due to the encouragement and patronage which the Seths extended to their fellow clansmen.

The Poem in praise of the wife of Manik Chand is written in Gujarati and has been translated thus:—

1. With salutations to the Lord Gautama and the goddess Saraswati I begin these verses, singing the praises of great ones.

2. O gentle hearer! Harken to the praise of the Sati for it will cleanse thy mind and purify thy hearing.

3. The Jina bade us give heed to four virtues which, if a man pursue, he shall be able to steer safely across the ocean of the world.

4. In the Satya Juga there were sixteen Satis but of those of the Kali Juga Manik Deviji is chief.

5. Many volumes would be necessary to tell of her countless austerities and her strict observance of every ceremony. Let it suffice me to record those virtues which have made her famous.

6. Right glad am I to tell her virtues; in the relation of them my tongue becomes purified and it will enable men to steer clear of the shoals in this sea of life.

7. First will I relate her birth and her lineage and the town and province in which she was born.

8. In the Jambudwipa lies the country of Bharatabarsa and in the centre of this stands Mount Meru eight miles in height.

9. There is a province of Bharatabarsa named Batsa and therein is situated the city of Kausambi and below this city flows Ganga.

10. Chandanbala, most renowned of the Satis of the Satya Juga, was born in that city and Mrigabati, Satis also.

11. Anathmuni, the sixth Tirthankara Padma Praba, and many a holy man beside were also born there.

12. Near Kausambi is the town of Shahzadpur, below which flows Ganga, containing inhabitants of eighteen different nationalities.

13. The town in beauty is like to Indra's heaven and the 84 clans of the Oswals dwell therein.

14. Here lived Sravak Puran Mull of the Pargara clan, a man most virtuous and hospitable.

15. And his wife Gulabbahu, a devout follower of the Jaina religion and a woman of charitable heart.

16. Of these was Manik Debi born and her soul came from heaven.

17. She was born on the eleventh day of the full moon in the month of Sravan, Samvat 1737.

18. Kisor Kumari was the name they gave her and as she grew she became her parents' greatest joy.

19. For every lucky sign was visible in her and she possessed all good attributes.

20. In course of time her parents decided that a bridegroom must be sought and great wealth should be spent on the ceremonies of her marriage.

21. So her father gave his youngest brother charge to find a fair bridegroom for his daughter and he, after much travel, came at last to the town of Patna.

22. In the town of Patna lived a chief of the Oswals, of the clan Gailarha, a wealthy man and a generous.

23. Hiranand was his name ; he was like a king who is obeyed by all, and he had seven goodly sons.

24. One of these, whose name was Manik Chand, was also kinglike ; he seemed to be an incarnation of Kamdeva ; he was blessed with every lucky sign and endowed with all good qualities.

25. The messenger, glad at heart that his quest was successful, bestowed upon him the marks of betrothal and made preparations for the marriage.

26. Then the bridegroom, with his friends and relations, took his journey to the town of Puran Mall and procession

that went with him with its chariots, horsemen, footmen and elephants was like an army.

27. Puran Mall welcomed him in great state and at a time when the stars were propitious gave him his daughter in marriage.

28. A great dowry he gave with her and rejoiced the hearts of those who came in the bridal party with gifts ; each received according to his rank ; then he sent his daughter to the home of her husband.

29. And a messenger was sent to announce the happy tidings of their coming to the parents of the bridegroom and they were delighted and welcomed them with signs of great joy.

30. When the bridegroom with his bride entered the house great gifts were bestowed on the needy ; the female members of the family rejoiced when they saw the bride for a lucky bride is a great blessing to a house.

31. At her coming the fortune of the family increased ; wealth flowed in abundantly—jewels of every kind, gold, silver and every precious thing so that they could not be counted for number.

32. Elephants, horses, palkis, raths and such like things, servants, maids and attendants grew in number day by day.

33. The name of a virtuous man is spread throughout the length and breadth of the land ; his family increases ; his wealth and possessions multiply.

34. The bride came like Lakshmi in human guise ; therefore her name was changed to Manik Devi ; in beauty also she was like a goddess.

35. The happiness of the two was like that of Indra and his consort in heaven who delight in singing and music and the dance.

36. Bliss such as heavenly beings know was theirs ; the happiness which flows from good deeds was theirs also ; their love was like that of the chatak-pakshi for the water which falls from the clouds.

37. Manik Chand, like a king, came to Murshidabad in fair Bengal and built him a banking house there.

38. The Emperor of Delhi gave him high position and nobles, gentry, soldiers and all men obeyed his wishes.

39. Farrukhsiyar, the Emperor, gave him the title of Seth, and the proclamation of his title was made throughout the empire.

40. And all the wealth of Bengal was his. His son, named Fateh Chand, was born like Indra in heaven.

41. To him the Emperor of Delhi gave deeds with the title of Jagat Seth, which means "Lord of the World" and he became the ornament of the state and the pillar of his family.

42. Who became Jagat Seth after him and the saviour of his race? He had two sons, like to the sun and the moon.

43. Seth Ananda Chand and Daya Chand were their names and they were like manifestations of Indra and Kamdeva.

44. And the son of Seth Ananda Chand was Mahtab Rao and the son of Daya Chand was Rup Chand—possessors of many virtues.

45. Manik Devi was exceedingly blessed inasmuch as her sons and grandsons were as jewels recovered from the ocean. The children of the other six sons of Hiranand were also men of note and of great ability in their callings.

46. The cousins and their wives lived together in great friendship and happiness. They formed a goodly company like that of Indra and the gods in heaven ; and the fortune of the family increased day by day.

47. In the morning they worshipped the god Jina and listened to the teaching of pious preceptors whom they served with great regard ; all the rules and ceremonial rites enjoined for each day those they duly observed.

48. They spent their money in the seven ways consecrated by the Jain religion and gave relief also to the poor and needy. Mataji<sup>85</sup> duly observed all the ceremonies enjoined by the holy ones.

49. So likewise did her sons and grandsons failing in nought. They were wealthy and of liberal hearts and it was pleasant to them to give to others.

85. The Mother, i.e., Manik Devi.

50. Manik Chand, having acquired great reputation in this world, left for the heavenly home on the tenth day of the new moon of the month of Magh, Samvat 1771.

51. Throughout the days of mourning the renowned Sati, Mataji, told her beads and fasted and practised other austerities which cannot be fully described ; and all the world began to admire her.

52. It became her great desire to repair to the hill of Parasnath if haply the sight of the god might assuage her grief.

53. And when her son knew of her desire he formed an assembly to go to the hill.

54. At his request the lords of the districts through which the assembly was to pass repaired the roads and constructed new ones.

55. Invitations to join the assembly were issued in all the countries around with money for the expenses of the journey.

56. Those that asked received horses, carriages, tents and conveyances of different kinds.

57. People came from all quarters and when they were assembled astrologers were charged to appoint an auspicious moment to begin the journey.

58. And so she started with the assembly at an auspicious moment in a good day when all the stars were favourable.

59. The assembly had chosen Seth Anand Chand to be their leader and he set out in right royal state with his brother Seth Daya Chand.

60. With joy and great pomp the assembly set out to visit the god of the Jainas. There were tents of velvet and embroidery.

61. There was red broad cloth, calicoes from the Carnatic and covers of different hues. On the way men flocked to see the sight and when they departed they said "Indra has come down from heaven."

62. The elephant were richly caparisoned with howdahs, umbrellas and covers.

63. There were swift steeds of Camboja with harness of gold and silver and decked with jewels.

64. Innumerable vehicles also and chariots and palanquins of every kind. Rajas and Ranas knew not such wealth as was displayed in this procession.

65. Armed guards and horsemen accompanied the procession—men zealous in the performance of their duty.

66. The elephants bore bands of musicians and their banners floated in the air. The Rajas of the neighbouring countries gazed at the sight with awe.

67. Holy men and women of the Swetambara sect of the Jains were there and followers of the six systems of philosophy ; the number of suppliants could not be counted.

68. Prominent among the 84 clans in the assembly were the Oswal, Srinial and Purwar ; among them were very rich men to whom the leader showed due respect.

69. The first stopping place was Burdwan where the 24th Tirthankar, Mahavira observed Chaturmasya. Thence they came to Champapuri where the sight of the temple of Jineswar filled them with joy.

70. At Pachete they visited the temple of Raghunathji in which the Mahasati Sita also dwells ; here they made some stay to see the forest, the hills and the monkeys that abounded there.

71. Next they halted at Bundapuri and having worshipped the Jineswar acquired much merit ; then they arrived at the foot of the Sekharjis and deemed their lives had been blessed when they saw the sacred hills.

72. Then they ascended the hill and saw the Jineswar ; they performed the Snatri Puja and consecrated a temple ; and thus was the heart's desire of the Mataji fulfilled.

73. She made offering to the Jineswar of ornaments of gold set with jewels ; she performed the Satravedi Puja and saw and did worship in the twenty temples above where twenty of the Tirthankars attained wisdom and salvation, thus spreading the Jain religion.

74. For three days they lived on the top of the hill and worshipped in the temples with much respect and reverence, acquiring great merit and attaining the purpose for which they were born.

75. Then they descended to the foot of the hills and the leader of the assembly did honour to his attendants and



followers ; he invited them to feast with him and presented the guests with coins of gold.

76. Those who had accompanied the party offered a garland to Seth Anand Chand and they praised and blessed him for the good work he had done.

77. The assembly returned home rejoicing and there was great joy in the city also ; men said "great praise has Manik Devi won for she has done all that wealth can do."

78. Her reputation for piety spread throughout the length and breadth of the land for it was she who had taken an assembly to Sikharj and spent vast wealth thereon.

79. After her return from the pilgrimage, in her joy she resolved to construct a silver throne for the Jain temple in her dwelling house and to place on the throne a god made of gold and jewels ; and this she did.

80. In the morning she used to worship for three hours in her temple and then she would utter the nankar mantra ; after this she gave alms and broke her fast.

81. She would fast for two days and eat on the third day but should other days appointed for fasting intervene these also she joyfully observed and broke her fast at the end of the period ; this rule she strictly observed while she lived.

82. She would listen to the reading of the Scriptures for six hours ; she recited mantras by way of jap thrice a day—in the morning, at mid-day, and in the evening ; on the eighth and fourteenth days of the moon she applied herself to the spread of her religion and twice a day, in the morning and evening, she did penance for her sins.

83. She would never eat young vegetables ; she gave alms daily ; none could excel her in the practices of religion—no, neither Raja nor Rana.

84. It was during the lifetime of Manik Devi that Jain temples, dharmshalas and poshals (?) began to be built in Bengal; there were none before for there were few Jains in the country but during her time they came in numbers.

85. Only a few of the inhabitants of Murshidabad were Jains but owing to her patronage they increased in number to a thousand.

86. Those that arrived without food or clothing or money the revered Mataji supplied with everything.

87. The Mataji heaped jewels on those who beforetime had not even a gold ring in their possession.

88. In the Satya Juga, Karna, Vikram, and Bhoja were famed for their charity but in the Kali Juga Manik Devi has been surpassed by none.

89. Since her arrival in this city it has moved in the paths of advancement and progress.

Here follow details of her numerous fasts and other acts of asceticism.

90. Thus she fasted for twenty-six years, eating every third day only, taking no thought for her body for she received power of endurance from on high.

100. Scant was the sustenance she took when she broke her fast for the very morsels she ate were all counted.

101. Though her asceticism reduced her to a skeleton yet she departed not from her practice one whit.

102. She gave lacs in charity ; she did great good ; she supported an innumerable number of her fellow-creatures and from them acquired merit.

103. The world had no charm for her, nor envy ; she was a storehouse of forgiveness and mercy ; she knew not gladness nor ever felt grief for she was above these things.

104. There are four kinds of virtue—of gifts, of character, of austerities and of meditation ; these four were entwined in the heart of Mataji.

105. Her happiness was the happiness of the wife of Indra ; for her body she cared nought ; in her prayer she remembered the wise men who have attained to Nirvana.

106. Her name was great; her relations many; her family was flourishing. Her fortune, too, was great in that she bore in her womb a Jagat Seth.

107. Her son ever paid heed to her wishes and approached her with reverence thrice a day.

108. So charitable was she that to one who asked a hundred she gave a thousand and to one who asked a thousand she would give one lac. A human being was to her as her god.

109. Every day was marked by charity and virtue but during the last year of her life her gifts increased.

110. She gave clothing or food or whatever was asked of her. In this year she showered gold like rain from heaven.

111. She gave gold to all and so obtained great fame in the world; no one has surpassed her in charity to this day.

112. She blessed her sons, her grandsons and all the members of her family wishing them long life, prosperity, peace and happiness.

113. In the temple before her god with purity of heart and thought she vowed to eat no more; but she refrained not from charity; nor omitted to hear the words of Scripture, nor ceased to acquire merit.

114. With her thoughts fixed on the god of her religion she asked for pardon from all her fellow-creatures. Then Manik Devi departed for the dwelling place of the gods.

115. She breathed her last on the first day of the full moon in the month of Pous, Samvat 1798 when the constellation Pushya was in the ascendant.

116. O blessed lady Manik Devi! Your life was worthy; you attained the object for which you were born; you have made your name famous by asceticism and charity.

118. Blessed is her father Puran Mall and happy her mother.

119. She was like to Jaimanti, Chandanbala, Mrigabati—holy women all—and the Sati Subhadra, who flourished in the fourth age.

120. After them; in this fifth age, she firmly established the Jain religion in which she appeared like an incarnation; for it was written in the Scriptures that virtuous ladies would flourish.

121. Now has the prophecy of Scripture been fulfilled in the person of Manik Devi whom I have personally known.

122. Hearing of her virtuous conduct my heart was filled with joy; the mere mention of her name avails to drive away misery; Even women of ill life who hear of her name and deeds may follow in her footsteps.

123. And these verses were composed by Muni Sri Nihal Chand, a disciple of Upadhyaya Sri Hurak Chand, surnamed Parsha Chandra.

124. On the 13th day after the full moon in the month of Pous, Samvat, 1798, at Murshidabad.

125. Whoever will read or hear them will derive much pleasure and acquire merit through the kindness of the Mahasati Manik Deviji whose biography here ends.

Wealth is acquired by charity;  
Conduct is the source of happiness;  
Religious austerities destroy Karma;  
Virtuous thoughts attain salvation.

## CHAPTER 2

### JAGAT SETH FATEH CHAND.

#### 1.

A small notebook, written in Hindi, in the possession of the present head of the family, has preserved a few facts relating to the early years of Fateh Chand. In the year 1757 Samvat (1700 A.D.) while yet a boy and living with his parents at Patna, he was adopted by Manik Chand and joined the latter at Dacca. A few years later came the migration to Murshidabad. We have seen that in 1711 he was known to the English as an eminent merchant and that in 1712 he, as well as Manik Chand, received marks of the favour of Murshid Kuli Khan. After co-operating with Manik Chand for a period of fourteen years he was qualified to take his father's place as head of the house and to become the chief adviser of Murshid Kuli Khan and his right-hand man in all matters of finance.

In March 1715 Fateh Chand was at Patna. The Surman embassy was there and Kwajah Sarhad, Surman's second in command, alleging that it was dangerous to proceed, wished to delay the embassy at Patna. He declared that some of the principal inhabitants of Patna supported him in this course and one of the names he cited was that of Fateh Chand.<sup>1</sup>

About the same time Fateh Chand obtained from the Emperor the title of Seth. The farman conferring the title is dated the 5th year of the reign of the Emperor Farrukhsiyar and is couched in similar terms to the farman granted to Manik Chand. The farman was presented to the Victoria Memorial at Calcutta by the head of the family on the occasion of Lord Curzon's visit to the ancient home of the Seths on the 1st March 1902.

1. Wilson, *Early Annals of the English in Bengal*, Vol. II, Part 2, p. 24.

Farrukhisyar was put to death in 1719. The Syed brothers, who had raised him to the throne, were also the instruments of his downfall. Two puppet emperors played a kingly part for a few months after the manner of the Merovings of old and then the powerful Mayors of the Palace drew forth Roshen Akhtar from his retirement in the castle of Selingarh and proclaimed him Emperor with the title of Muhammad Shah.

It was the general belief in Bengal that Murshid Kuli Khan would suffer the fate of his master, the Emperor Farrukhsiyar, for Syed Abdu-llah Khan, Muhammad Shah's Vizier, was the Nawab's "declared enemy". In fact promises of greater preferment were held out to him in order to entice him to Court but "he, being thoroughly sensible of the treachery designed against him, has as often found excuses for his staying in Bengal and 'tis the general opinion of all persons that he will defend himself where he now is till he is cut off."<sup>2</sup> The danger passed away with the disappearance of the two Syed brothers from the scene and Murshid Kuli Khan despatched the tribute of Bengal to the Emperor together with a complimentary present from himself. The Nawab attempted to force the European nations to contribute towards this present and directed Seth Fateh Chand and two other officers to enforce his wishes.

Seth Fateh Chand and his two colleagues summoned the vakils of the English and Dutch and informed them that they had been appointed by the Nawab to demand a nazaranah<sup>3</sup> for the Emperor from the English and Dutch which was to be paid into their hands. The Dutch were to pay Rs. 60,000. The sum to be paid by the English was not mentioned but their wakil was told that the Nawab intended to stop the trade of the English in Bengal if they did not comply with his demand. This was early in March, 1721. By May the Nawab had met with no response to his demand and so he ordered Kantu, the Company's broker at the Cassimbazar factory, to

2. Wilson, *Early Annals of the English in Bengal*. Proof Sheets of Vol. III, p. 105.

3. A ceremonial present, properly an offering from an inferior to a superior. Hobson Jobson, p. 634.

be seized to answer certain charges, the nature of which is now rather obscure. The result of this measure was the dislocation of the trade at Cassimbazar for the Company's servants at the factory there carried on all negotiations with their Indian merchants by means of Kantu. Further the President and Council felt that the Nawab's proceedings were "an insult that must be attended with the worst of consequences should we tamely bear it" and resolved to oppose firmly this method of the Nawab to bring pressure to bear upon them so that he might fleece them in the matter of the nazaranah. They gave instructions to their vakil to raise the King's duhai<sup>4</sup> in open court at Hugli, a step already taken at Murshidabad, and ordered a reinforcement of European soldiers to proceed to Cassimbazar.

At the same time Governor Feake wrote a letter to the Nawab protesting against his proceedings. Meanwhile the Chief at Cassimbazar had secured the interest of Asad Khan, an officer in favour with the Nawab, who undertook to place a letter from the Chief in the Nawab's hands. The first attempt, made by Asad Khan's deputy, was a failure for the Nawab angrily refused to receive the letter. A personal application made by Asad Khan met with a more favourable reception and the Nawab ordered the letter to be brought to him when he was at leisure. After perusing it he sent for Seth Fateh Chand and directed him to enquire "into the story of the broker's wife hanging herself." Seth Fateh Chand sent for Kantu and caused to be examined at the Nawab's kachari where he spoke strongly in Kantu's favour. The result of his representations to the Nawab, supported by those of Asad Khan, was the release of the broker in a handsome manner, "the Nawab bidding him tell his masters, that though he was servant of the English yet he was a subject and tenant of the King's, and as there were such reports he could not avoid examining into the truth of them, which he had thus long deferred, being very busy in dispatching the King's treasure and that now he might go to the

4. "An exclamation shouted aloud by a petitioner for redress at a Court of Justice. . . . It has a kind of analogy, as Thevenot pointed out over 200 year ago, to the old Norman Haro! Haro! viens a mon aide, mon Prince!" Hobson Jobson, p. 321.

Factory and tell them to go on with their business as usual." Nothing more was heard about a nazaranah to the Emperor.<sup>5</sup>

In August of the same year the English made another attempt to obtain the right of coining into rupees at the Murshidabad mint the treasure which they received from Europe. The Company's servants at Cassimbazar used their utmost endeavours to gain over to their cause some of the Nawab's officers but all their efforts were fruitless. They were informed "that while Futtichund is so great with the Nawab, they can have no hopes of that grant, he alone having the sole use of the Mint, nor dare any other shroff or merchant buy or coin a rupee's worth of silver."<sup>6</sup>

The Company were thus forced to sell their treasure to Seth Fateh Chand and under the circumstances they had no alternative but to take the price the banker offered. The treasure sent from Europe generally consisted of French and Spanish crowns and was sold by weight. Fateh Chand's offer for two chests of treasure was at the rate of 207 rupees 4 annas for 240 'sicca rupees' weight of silver and though the Company held out for some time in the hope of obtaining a better price they were obliged eventually to close with the offer for Seth Fateh Chand would give no more. In the same month (November 1721) ten chests of ducatoons were sent to Cassimbazar for disposal and there was another dispute with Fateh Chand about the price. The banker offered 2 rupees 7 annas 3 pies for each ducatoon. The English were unwilling to let them go at that price declaring that they had always sold them at 2 rupees 7 annas 6 pies each, but at length they agreed "to divide the difference" and accept 2 rupees 7 annas 4½ pies per ducatoon.<sup>7</sup> Evidently the English merchants of the time were not bad hands at driving a bargain when they stood out for a difference of a half-penny on each ducatoon nor did Seth Fateh Chand take an unscrupulous advantage of the monopoly he possessed when he

5. Wilson, *Early Annals of the English in Bengal*. Proof Sheets of Vol. III, pp. 322, 340, 341, 350.

6. *Ibid*, p. 369.

7. Wilson, *Early Annals of the English in Bengal*. Proof sheets of Vol. III, pp. 377-8, 382. The ducatoon was worth five to six shillings. The exchange value of the rupee at this time was from 2s. 6d. to 2s. 9d. (India Office Records, Consultations for January, 1722-23.)



agreed to a price one farthing per ducatoon below that which the English would willingly have accepted. Indeed the Bengal records of the Company show that the relations between the Company's servants and the house of Jagat Seth were founded on mutual respect and mutual confidence and though, as we shall see, disputes sometimes arose between them some of which entailed serious consequences, yet the banker could say with justice that he had suffered on account of his trust in the English while the English were bound, in their official capacity as servants of the East India Company, to deny liability for debts incurred by some of the Company's servants in their private capacity as traders on their own behalf.

In the year 1722, owing to some reason which cannot be ascertained now, it was very difficult to obtain money throughout northern India. The Emperor himself felt the pinch severely,<sup>8</sup> while in Bengal money was so scarce that, at the end of March, although Murshid Kuli Khan had received several peremptory orders to despatch the Bengal treasure to Delhi, he was still 35 lakhs short of the sum required. To add to his perplexities it appeared that Muhammad Shah's new Vizier, the celebrated Nizamu-l-Mulk, was not his friend for he had refused to accept the nazaranah which the Nawab had sent to him on his appointment.<sup>9</sup>

The sequel of these events may possibly be seen in a letter dated the 18th June from the Chief and Council at Cassimbazar<sup>10</sup> in which they report to the President and Council at Calcutta that they had disposed of more bullion to Seth Fateh Chand "who, having been under the displeasure of the Nabob and, as reported, fleeced out of Five Laack of Rupees, could not pay them ready money for all the bullion" but they hoped to receive the remainder of the money the next day. Assuming the report to have been correct it would mean that Murshid Kuli Khan, in his difficulties, had turned to Seth Fateh Chand for help, that the banker had not responded in a manner adequate to the Nawab's necessities and that then the Nawab

8. See page 47.

9. Wilson, *Early Annals of the English in Bengal*. Proof sheets of what was apparently Vol. IV, p. 9.

10. India Office Records—Bengal Consultations. Consultation Monday, 24th June, 1722.

violently extorted money from Fateh Chand. On this it may be remarked that extorting money from Seth Fateh Chand was a most dangerous game for the Nawab to play and only sheer desperation would have made him resort to it. The statement, too, is admittedly merely a rumour which seemed a plausible explanation of the facts and is not given on the authority of their wakil<sup>11</sup> from whom the English at Cassimbazar derived reliable information relating to the affairs of the durbar at Murshidabad. A more probable explanation of the incident—one agreeing with the events in the life of Seth Fateh Chand which immediately followed—is that the banker, at a time of great financial stringency, came to the aid not only of Murshid Kuli Khan but also of the Emperor, Muhammad Shah.

If there had been such a cloud between the Nawab and the banker it was soon dispelled and the latter, apparently, had soon forgiven the act of extortion which rumour had ascribed to the Nawab. In August we find the English applying to Seth Fateh Chand as the channel of easiest access to the Nawab. An accusation, involving the sum of Rs. 50,000, had been made against the Dutch wakil at Dacca and, by the Nawab's orders, the English wakil at Murshidabad had been arrested, merely because he happened to be the uncle of the accused man and near at hand. The English demanded his release which the Nawab was willing to grant provided that the wakil gave security in writing for any demands that might be made against him. Thereupon Captain Borlace, the commandant of the soldiers at Cassimbazar, was sent to Seth Fateh Chand to assure him that the English would never consent to such an unjust measure and "that if the Nabob would not release him they would take such measures as should." Fateh Chand immediately went to the Nawab and informed him that the English had sent the captain of their soldiers to demand the wakil. The Nawab ordered him to be released and delivered to Captain Borlace and ordered the Dutch wakil at Murshidabad to give the security first demanded from the English wakil.<sup>12</sup>

11. The authorised representative of the English at the Nawab's durbar.

12. Bengal Consultations (India Office Records). Consultation of Thursday, 30th August, 1722.

## 2.

Seth Fateh Chand had two sons—Anand Chand and Dya Chand. By this period the elder of the two had grown up and entered the firm so that the house began to be known as that of Seth Fateh Chand and Anand Chand. The earliest extant record of this is contained in a resolution of the Bengal Council, dated the 13th May, 1723 which runs as follows:—  
 “Seat Futtichund Annunchund having paid into the Hon’ble Company’s Cash the 9th Inst. ten thousand rupees Madrass, desiring a Bill of Debt be given him for the same.

Agreed a Bill be given accordingly.”<sup>13</sup>

It is probable, however, that by this date the name of the firm used by the English had already become obsolete for in the fourth year of the reign of Muhammad Shah, that is, some time between the beginning of November 1722 and the end of October 1723,<sup>14</sup> Seth Fateh Chand received from the Emperor the title of Jagat Seth and his son Anand Chand the title of Seth so that the name of the banking house became “Jagat Seth Fateh Chand and Seth Anand Chand.” The correct name does not appear in the Bengal records till the year 1740.

The original farman of the Emperor which is still in the possession of the family has been thus translated:—“At this victorious hour and happy moment, the world-obeyed command of sunny lusture receives the honour of issue that, from the Court of eternal sovereignty, Seth Fateh Chand—with the award of the title of Jagat Seth as a hereditary distinction and the bestowal of magnificent robes of honour, an elephant and a pearl earring, and his son Anand Chand with the title of Seth and the gift of robes of honour and a pearl earring—have hoarded the treasure of trust and dignity. It is proper that civil and ministerial officers and all secretaries of the present and future, living within the protected territories should designate the aforesaid Jagat Seth Fateh Chand and also desig-

13. Bengal Consultations (India Office Records), Consultation of Monday, 13th May, 1723.

14. The English at Cassimbazar write at the beginning of November, 1721, that the sicca rupees of the 3rd year of Muhammad Shah “are just come out.” (Wilson, *Early Annals of the English in Bengal*. Proof sheets of Vol. III, p. 377.)

nate his son Seth Anand Chand. They should deem this imperative from the presence of glorious majesty.

Written on the 12th Rajab, in the fourth year of the exalted reign."

A tradition has been handed down in the family to the effect that Fateh Chand received the title as a reward for services rendered to the Emperor. There was a famine in Delhi and great was the suffering of its inhabitants. Fateh Chand who was in the city at the time, appeared at Court where he was received with honour and undertook to relieve the people from their distress. He seems to have recommended the temporary issue of some kind of paper money for he requested the Emperor to announce publicly that hundis<sup>15</sup> would be placed in circulation in the city. This was done with the happy result that the famine disappeared. The Emperor was highly pleased with Fateh Chand and conferred upon him the title of Jagat Seth. There certainly was a great scarcity in Delhi when Muhammad Shah ascended the throne in 1719 but "from that moment provisions that had arisen to an immoderate price, commenced becoming cheaper, and once more plenty shewed its face in every market."<sup>16</sup> The troubles that followed and the dilatory methods of the Mughal Court would explain the delay in issuing the farman. It may be pardonable to doubt, however, whether the later Mughal Emperors exhibited much concern for the sufferings of their subjects and in any case it is difficult to understand how the circulation of hundis could avail in such a crisis. But if the famine was of a financial nature this fact in the story becomes of the greatest significance and we know that there was an exceptional dearth of money in northern India at the beginning of 1722. During the second and third years of the reign of Muhammad Shah the treasury was empty, the army ill-paid and warlike projects abandoned perforce.<sup>17</sup> Urgent demands were sent for the Bengal tribute while we read in the record that Murshid Kuli Khan "is under very affliction that money is so scarce."<sup>18</sup> On the other hand

15. Bankers' draft.

16. *Seir Mutaqherin*, Vol. I, p. 158.

17. *Seir Mutaqherin*, Vol. I, pp. 223, 251, 253.

18. Wilson, *Early Records of the English in Bengal*. Proof sheets of Vol. IV, p. 9.

in the sixth year of his reign we find the Emperor is able to grant a krór of rupees to one of his generals for the purpose of raising an army and maintain this army in the field for some months at a cost of five lakhs a month.<sup>19</sup>

Here clearly is to be found the kernel of truth embedded in the story. An Emperor who had been rescued from such difficulties would naturally have hailed his deliverer as Jagat Seth, "the banker of the world," and have authorised him to hand down the title to his descendants.

Such a title may appear strange to us and it was evidently not understood by the English in Bengal at the time. Up to 1740 it is seldom found in the records while in that year the English seem to have been under the impression that Jagat Seth and Fateh Chand were separate members of the firm at Murshidabad as the following extract from the Cash Account for July 1740 will show :—

By Juggutseat, Futtichund and Seat Anunchund paid them  
as per Order of Council this Day

Principal Sicca	...	Rs.	121000
Interest from the 5th			
April is 3 mos. 26 days at			
12 per cent.	...	Rs.	4719

Sicca Rupees	...	125719
Batta 15'' 8p. ct.	...	19486''7''3

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145205''7''3<sup>20</sup>

20. Bengal Consultations (India Office Records). The comma occurs again in the Consultation of the 29th March 1742, when the Council record that they have taken up at interest the sum of 110,000 sicca rupees and signed a note of hand for the amount payable on demand to "Jaggatseat, Futtichand and Seat Anunchund."

The translator of the *Seir Mutaqherin*, himself a European, writing in 1786, considered it necessary to call the attention of his readers in a footnote to the fact that Jagat Seth was

19. *Seir Mutaqherin*, Vol. I, pp. 270, 273.

a title and not a name.<sup>21</sup> At Murshidabad, however, the title was scrupulously used by the Nawab and his officers and there was no misunderstanding there of the high rank attached to it. The holder held a position of hereditary dignity superior to that of any zamindar in Bengal<sup>22</sup> and his place at the Durbar was on the left hand of the Nawab.<sup>23</sup> An event of later years throws light on this point. After the death of Jagat Seth Fateh Chand his two grandsons, who were cousins, jointly carried on the affairs of the firm. The junior partner was subsequently ennobled with the title of Maharaja. The senior partner had the title of Jagat Seth which was a higher one than that of Maharaja.

Another tradition handed down in the family may be referred to this period. It is said that Jagat Seth Fateh Chand "was held in such honour at court, that it was proposed to supersede Murshid Kuli Khan, who then lay under the imperial displeasure, and to appoint Fateh Chand to the Government of Bengal. But the banker refused to occupy the post that was filled by the great patron of his family, and by means of his friendly offices procured a pardon for the Nawab. In the farman issued on this occasion, it was expressly stated that the imperial grace was only exercised in consideration for the earnest prayers of Fateh Chand with whom the Nawab was instructed to consult henceforward on all matters of State."<sup>24</sup> An old memorandum respecting the family of Harakh Chand, fourth Jagat Seth, printed in Long's "Unpublished Records of Government"<sup>25</sup> does not mention the appointment of Fateh Chand as Governor but says that "at his intercession the Emperor pardoned the Nabob Jaffier Khan, the Soubahdar of Bengal, who had incurred the royal displeasure, and restored that officer to his confidence and regard." There is no historical proof of this statement but it is quite consistent with the state of affairs in 1722. At the time it was believed that the Vizier Nizamu-l-Mulk was unfriendly towards Murshid Kuli

21. Seir Mutaqherin, Vol. I, p. 356 note.

22. Hunter, Statistical Account of Bengal, Vol. ix, p. 252.

23. There is a picture in the palace at Murshidabad showing Jagat Seth occupying this place at the Nawab's Durbar.

24. Hunter, Statistical Account of Bengal, Vol. ix, p. 254.

25. pp. 578, 579.

Khan<sup>26</sup> and the Emperor would certainly have been greatly displeased at the delay in sending the Bengal tribute for that year. Fateh Chand, too, had exceptional opportunities during 1722 of doing such a service to Murshid Kuli Khan while in 1723 we find him called "the Nabob's chief favourite"<sup>27</sup> which would be natural under the circumstances.

To this period we may ascribe the foundation of the great influence that Fateh Chand and his successors possessed at the Court of Delhi. Whenever a khilat<sup>28</sup> was sent to the Nawab a similar distinction was conferred on Jagat Seth. The Emperor presented Fateh Chand with a fine emerald seal with his title of Jagat Seth engraved upon it desiring that he would preserve it and hand it down to his posterity.<sup>29</sup> A striking instance of the power of the heads of this family at Delhi was the manner in which they obtained farmans ratifying the appointment of the Nawab. They were not mere agents between the Nawab and the Court. Their co-operation appears to have been absolutely essential. There is no direct evidence that Fateh Chand obtained farmans from Shuja-ud-daula and Sarfaraz Khan, the next two Nawabs of Bengal, but such evidence as there is, favours that supposition. With regard to the former, on the one hand Fateh Chand did not aid Murshid Kuli Khan when he tried to obtain a farman for his favourite, Sarfaraz Khan,<sup>30</sup> and Murshid Kuli Khan's efforts were fruitless. On the other hand Shuja-ud-daula, the comparatively unimportant Deputy Nazim of Orissa, was successful and Fateh Chand was one of his well-wishers.<sup>31</sup> With regard to the latter more than one historian was inclined to believe that he never obtained a farman from Court.<sup>32</sup> It was Fateh Chand who obtained for Alivardi Khan a farman appoin-

26. Wilson, *Early Annals of the English in Bengal*. Proof sheets of Vol. IV, p. 9.

27. Bengal Consultation (India Office Records). Consultation of Monday, 2nd September, 1723.

28. A dress of honour.

29. Long's *Unpublished Records of Government*, p. 579. Hunter's *Statistical Account of Bengal*, Vol. ix, pp. 254, 255.

30. Rai Balkishan is mentioned as the chief agent of Murshid Kuli Khan at the imperial court at this time, *Riyazu-s-salatin*, p. 287.

31. *Seir Mutaqherin*, Vol. I, p. 302.

32. Stewart, *History of Bengal*, p. 347 (note). Scott, *History of the Deccan*, etc. (1794), Vol. 2, p. 317.

ting him Nawab of Behar in his own right.<sup>33</sup> When Alivardi Khan had defeated and slain Sarfaraz Khan in battle it was Fateh Chand who obtained for him a farman confirming him in the Government of Bengal. Holwell asserts that it was a sham farman fabricated by the Seths and characteristically goes on to say "that Alivardi Khan was never confirmed in the government by a real Phirmaund, is a fact that admits of no doubt."<sup>34</sup> The fact admits of so much doubt that the whole statement may be summarily dismissed as a fabrication of Holwell himself. It is not the only item of information that we owe to Holwell alone. It is not the only charge that he brought against a man without a shred of evidence. It is not the only story he concocted to serve his own ends. The justification of these remarks will be given later. Here it must suffice to state that Holwell's interest in making his assertion is plain. In his history of the period his main object seems to be to vilify Alivardi Khan and his brother Haji Ahmad. He presses into his service all the scandalous gossip of the bazars that he was able to procure. As a rule he does not call Alivardi Khan by his name. He is "the Usurper." But if Alivardi Khan received a farman from the Emperor confirming him in the government of Bengal and most historians declare that he did<sup>35</sup>—he had as good a title as any of his predecessors and the name of "usurper" was absurd. Therefore, says Holwell, the farman was a forgery of Jagat Seth's.

Siraj-ud-daula was the next Nawab and the relations between him and the Jagat Seth of the time were far from cordial. The consequence was that, for some time, Siraj-ud-daula was unable to obtain a farman from the Emperor. Jagat Seth's remissness in the matter led to a scene in full durbar. Siraj-ud-daula reproached him, slapped his face and put him in prison.<sup>36</sup> Again Clive relied upon Jagat Seth to obtain a farman from the Emperor confirming Mir Jafar as Nawab of Bengal and it

33. Scrafton's *Reflections*, p. 33.

34. Holwell's *Interesting Historical Events* (1766), Part I, pp. 109, 110.

35. *Seir Mutaqherin*, Vol. I, pp. 355, 372. *Riyazu-s-salatin*, p. 322. *Scott's Deccan*, Vol. 2, p. 319. *Stewart, History of Bengal*, p. 446.

36. *Long's Unpublished Records of Government*, p. 77.



was through Jagat Seth that Clive received his patent creating him an Omrah of the Emperor.<sup>37</sup>

## 3

In August, 1723, the English in Bengal were involved in a long dispute with the Nawab.<sup>38</sup> In consequence of the oppression of the Zamindar of Malda they had removed their factory from that place to Mugdanpore which was quite close to Malda but outside the Zamindar's jurisdiction. The Zamindar retaliated with an attempt to stop the English trade and what was worse, the removal of the factory angered the Nawab. The English at Cassimbazar applied to Jagat Seth Fateh Chand and he appears to have acted in their behalf but without much success for they reported to Calcutta that "as yet there is little hopes of Redress, Futtichund having refused to interpose any farther in the English Durbar affairs."<sup>39</sup>

The Council at Calcutta met to consider these reports from Cassimbazar and resolved to send soldiers to Malda. "Ordered also," the resolution continues, "that a letter be wrote to Futtichund (the Nabob's chief favourite) to represent these dishonourable and illegal practices, which if he does not prevail to have speedily remedied will be attended with the highest resentment."<sup>40</sup>

Fateh Chand promised to render the Company all the service he could and endeavoured to make good his promise with the result that he was rebuked by the Nawab for his forwardness on behalf of the English.<sup>41</sup> Nevertheless, in the weeks that followed the English tried every method to induce Fateh Chand to represent their case to the Nawab but, as was to be expected under the circumstances, "without producing any good effect."<sup>42</sup> In October the Zamindar of Malda died but the Government of Rajmahal had been sent against the factory with 500 horse and 300 gunmen and the English at Cassimbazar

37. Hill's Bengal in 1756-57.

38. Bengal Consultations (India Office Records).

39. Consultation, Monday 2nd September, 1723.

40. Ibid.

41. Consultation, 16th September, 1723.

42. Consultation, 22nd October, 1723.

applied to Fateh Chand for an order prohibiting this officer from molesting their people but they reported on the 22nd October that they had not been able to get any answer from him. A week later when the Nawab's forces seized all those who had dealings with the English at Malda the chief of the Cassimbabar factory sent the English wakil to the Durbar to give the duhai and sent their broker to Fateh Chand "to represent the unjust treatment, that he may use his Interest with the Nabob not to persist therein and thereby oblige us to have recourse to our military force, which we should do if he continued to impede our Hon'ble Masters' affairs."<sup>43</sup> Again on the 28th November the Company's servants at Cassimbazar reported that they had once more represented the state of affairs at Mugdanpore to Fateh Chand "whereof he took little notice."<sup>44</sup>

In truth the Nawab was inexorable and all the officers of the Durbar were aware of the fact. No one of them dared so much as speak to any of the English or their servants.<sup>45</sup> In vain the English defeated the forces sent against Malda, in vain they stopped all Muhammadan ships passing Fort William. In the meantime their trade in Bengal was being ruined. By the 3rd January 1724 they were obliged to withdraw their factory from Malda "it not being possible to accommodate those differences on any other terms at present."<sup>46</sup>

During 1724 the English made many endeavours to re-settle at Malda. In June they wrote to the Nawab asking for permission to visit him on the subject and his answer was conveyed to them by Jagat Seth Fateh Chand. After relating the reasons of the Nawab's displeasure with the English Fateh Chand informed them that the Nawab would not admit their visit without a payment of Rs. 5,000 and if they were desirous of resettling the factory at Malda they should have his permission to do so for Rs. 20,000 more.<sup>47</sup>

43. Consultation, 4th November, 1723.

44. Consultation, 2nd December, 1723.

45. "The Nabob persists in the Gentlemen of Mugdanpoor's being recalled and not an officer of the Durbar will speak to any of our People." (Consultation 23rd December, 1723).

46. Consultation, 9th January, 1723-24.

47. Ibid, 29th June, 1724.

In 1725 the relations between the Nawab and the English were better and when the Council at Cassimbazar informed him that their Chief, Henry Frankland, was leaving for Calcutta to become Governor of Fort William and wished to pay him a farewell visit "he acquainted them by Futtichundsaw, the person that delivered their message, that his indisposition was so great that he could not see him but as he had always been so he should continue a friend to the English."<sup>48</sup>

On the 28th March, 1726 the Company "desire Futtichundsaw to write to his Gomastah to supply our Factory at Dacca with what money they shall want"<sup>49</sup> to which Fateh Chand replied that he had sent orders to his gomastah at Dacca to supply the factory there with Rs. 50,000.<sup>50</sup> On the 29th September the Council at Dacca report that "a general exchange of officers in the mint has been a hindrance to their coinage yet they have kept their business going on by agreeing with Futtichund's Gomastah<sup>51</sup> who has supplied them with Dussassa rupees and he is to receive their siccas."<sup>52</sup>

In December, 1726 another big dispute, in which Fateh Chand played a prominent part, broke out between the Nawab and the English. Abdul Rahim, one of the Nawab's officers,—a man who had acquired an unenviable notoriety throughout Bengal for his cruel treatment of those zamindars who failed in their payments of the revenue<sup>53</sup>—suddenly demanded from the English an additional rent of Rs. 44,000 for their Calcutta towns<sup>54</sup> and followed up his demand by seizing their wakil at Murshidabad and by threatening to treat all their merchants in a similar manner.

The English looked to Jagat Seth Fateh Chand for aid as they had done in the former dispute. The President wrote several letters assuring Jagat Seth that the English would never comply with the unjust demand made on them and hoped that

48. Ibid, 27th December, 1725.

49. Ibid, 28th March, 1726.

50. Ibid, 11th April, 1726.

51. "A native agent or factor"—Hobson-Jobson, p. 384.

52. Consultation, 10th October, 1726.

53. Stewart, History of Bengal, p. 370.

54. Consultation, 12th December, 1726.

he and the officers at the Durbar would accommodate the affair and cause their vakil to be released.<sup>55</sup>

Jagat Seth's interposition at this stage of the dispute was a matter of extreme difficulty. The Calcutta towns formed a part of the Nawab's jagir, of which Abdul Rahim was steward, and no one at the Durbar dared to speak to the Nawab on behalf of the English in a matter relating to his own estates.<sup>56</sup> Besides the plain truth of the matter was that the Nawab wanted money from the English and meant to get it. Whether the money was given by the English in the form of additional rent for the land they held from him or under some other name was a matter of indifference to him.

Abdul Rahim took further measures to make the English comply with his demand. Some of their merchants at Murshidabad were arrested, their broker, Kantu, was forced to take refuge in the factory at Cassimbazar, while the rest of their merchants ran away or hid themselves to avoid being seized and put into prison. In reply the English recalled their vakil from Hugli after he had first given the King's duhai in the most public manner and insisted on having Abdul Rahim's unjust proceedings entered in all the newspapers.<sup>57</sup> By so doing they ensured the matter reaching the ears of the Emperor. They also resolved to allow no ship belonging to an Indian merchant to pass Fort William. Abdul Rahim in turn redoubled his efforts to capture every servant belonging to the Company as well as every merchant who was suspected of having traded with the English. The vakil was rigorously confined and treated so cruelly that he begged the English at Cassimbazar to send him Rs. 125 "which would procure him liberty to eat and save his back for a day or two."<sup>58</sup>

So matters went on till the middle of February 1727. Then the Nawab received a letter from the Governor of Hugli, forwarding a complaint from the owners of ships that they were being ruined and demanding that the customs they had paid should be refunded. Murshid Kuli Khan thereupon sent for Jagat Seth Fateh Chand who was now able to assume the role

55. Consultation, 13th February, 1726-27.

56. Consultation, 28th November, 1726.

57. Consultation, 13th February, 1726-27.

58. Consultation, 19th February, 1726-27.

of mediator between the Nawab and the English. "Late Friday night last," wrote the acting chief of the Cassimbazar factory on Sunday, the 19th February, "the Nabob sent for Futtichundsaw and told him he heard he had near two Lack of rupees ready to go to Hughly and asked him if he was not mad to venture such a large sum when the English were plundering boats and ships on the River and after some discourse asked if any of the English were at Cossimbazar, to which he replied none of them had left the factory but their Chief was not yet arrived, though if he pleased he would send a Chubdar<sup>59</sup> for the Broker. The Nabob smiled and said he would hardly venture to come, and bid him send his own Gomastah, who came and said Futtichund desired to speak with Contoo. They did not think proper to send him, but wrote to Futtichund signifying they would not let him go out of the Factory, unless he would be bound for his safe return, to which he returned answer he wanted to impart something of moment to them, and would send a person proper to be trusted to carry any message between them. What he has to propose they are entirely strangers to."<sup>60</sup>

On the 21st Jagat Seth sent his gomastah to the factory. "Would the English," he asked, "make the Nawab a nazranah when their new chief, Mr. Stephenson, arrived if the vakil and the other prisoners were released and the demand relating to the towns given up?" The Company's servants replied that they had positive orders from Calcutta not to treat on any terms which involved the payment of money but at the same time if the Nawab were willing to make up matters they did not know what the effect of the release of the prisoners would have on the President and his Council. Of one thing they were assured—as long as a man was under confinement the English would listen to no proposals.<sup>61</sup>

Before instructions could arrive from Calcutta the prisoners were scourged so inhumanly that they despaired of their lives if such severe usage were repeated.<sup>62</sup> Shortly afterwards, how-

59. Chobdar "a stick bearer," an attendant. The chobdars carry a staff overlaid with silver, Hobson Jobson, p. 204.

60. Consultation, 27th February, 1726-27.

61. Ibid.

62. Ibid, 6th March, 1726-27.

ever, Edward Stephenson, the new chief at Cassimbazar was ordered to acquaint Jagat Seth that the English would readily consent to make the Nawab a handsome present provided that their vakil and merchants were released and the demand on the towns entirely laid aside.

Several conferences followed with Jagat Seth's gomastah "to whom," wrote Mr. Stephenson, "we have represented our grievances in the most pathetick terms hoping thereby to influence Futtichundsaw so far in our favour as to persuade him to undeceive the Nabob, in answer to which Futtichund frankly owned we had reason on our side, but at the same time said that the Nabob before this unhappy affair had been remarkably favourable to us and made use of several instances of the great privileges we enjoyed to induce us to comply with the Nabob's demand, telling us he had spoke a great deal in our favour ; but found he (the Nawab) would never be brought to relinquish all though he might remit some part, and at the same time hinted that for thirty thousand rupees a perwanna might be obtained to prevent any like demand for the future to which we replied we would advise the Chief, etc. in Calcutta thereof and then give an answer."

On receipt of this letter the Calcutta Council agreed to empower Stephenson to offer the Nawab fifteen or twenty thousand rupees on condition that he would permit them to re-settle the factory at Malda, build a new house at Dacca, and finish the house they were building at Hugli, for he was to acquaint the Nawab, they could not consent to give away the money of their Honourable Masters unless they obtained some benefit by so doing and it would be better their trade should be entirely stopped than that they should tamely and easily comply with every unjust and unreasonable demand made upon them.<sup>63</sup>

This concluded the matter. On the 14th March Stephenson informed the Council that the prisoners had been released "which was brought about by means of Futtichundsaw who prevailed with the Nabob to give the people their freedom and assured him you should acknowledge it as a favour. We hope as Futtichund has given his word the Nabob should be satis-

63. Consultation, 13th March, 1726-27.

fied you will for the service and credit done us take care that he be no sufferer.”<sup>64</sup>

The Company received a parwannna from the Nawab that no demands of the kind would be made in future and in May paid the Nawab Rs. 20,000.<sup>65</sup>

The English had been very anxious to end this dispute in order to be free to take steps against the establishment of the Ostend East India Company in Bengal. On the 1st April three agents of this Company had arrived at Murshidabad and petitioned the Nawab to allow them to trade on the same footing as the Dutch and French. At the same time as the Rs. 20,000 was paid to the Nawab, the Ostenders, as they are called in the records, had gained over an important officer at the Durbar, “but,” wrote Mr. Stephenson on the 7th May, “so long as Futtichundsaw does not espouse their interest (which we are promised he will not) there is no fear of them obtaining any grant from the Nabob.” By the 17th May the representatives of the Ostend Company had visited the Nawab but this had cost them Rs. 30,000 “which with the seventy thousand deposited in Futtichund’s hands is a pishcash for the King.” When they obtained a farman from the Emperor they were to pay Rs. 50,000 more of which Rs. 25,000 was to go to the Nawab and the remainder to the officers at the durbar who had supported them.<sup>66</sup>

On the 30th May Stephenson reported that “the Ostenders left Syadevad very much disgusted at the disappointment they have met with from the Government for notwithstanding they have paid Rs. 125,000 they have not been able to get his Perwanna nor would they have had a Seerpaw had not Futtichundsaw concurred in order to get his note for seventy thousand sicca rupees, deposited three years ago in his hands, which by this stratagem he has done and left them in the lurch.”<sup>67</sup>

The note for Rs. 70,000 must refer to the sum deposited with Jagat Seth as a present for the Emperor and two corollaries follow from this. First, it was intended that the money should fall into the hands of the Nawab instead of the Emperor and

64. Consultation, 20th March, 1726-27.

65. Consultation, 15th May, 1727.

66. Consultations, 17th April, 15th May, 1727.

67. Consultation, 5th June, 1727.

second, Jagat Seth was acting in accordance with the wishes of the Nawab and not his own when he concurred in the matter mentioned above. Jagat Seth was extremely tenacious of his own interests and strongly opposed any measures of the European nations in Bengal which conflicted with those interests, he fought them when they refused to pay money which he considered his just due, but no evidence can be found in the English records or in the pages of historians that he ever, in the plenitude of his power, extorted money for himself or accepted a bribe in return for the many and great services he rendered the English. This fact is as honourable to the heads of this family as it is extraordinary when the practices of the age and Jagat Seth's exceptionable opportunities of profiting by them, are taken into consideration.

A craving for revenge succeeded the feelings of disgust and disappointment which filled the Ostenders on their departure from Cassimbazar. They made an attack on a ship belonging to Muhammadan merchants and killed some of the Nawab's subjects. The news of these events startled the Nawab and filled him with apprehension of greater mischief if the Ostenders were not speedily pacified—perhaps, too, his conscience did not acquit him of all responsibility for their conduct. He immediately promised them a parwana for their trade in Bengal and asked them to send one of their party to receive it. The English had to struggle for some years before the Ostenders were driven from Bengal.<sup>68</sup>

This was one of the last acts of Murshid Kuli Khan. Before the end of June he died and as the date of his death has been variously stated it is worth while to remove all doubt in this matter by quoting from the Bengal Consultations dated Monday, the 3rd July, 1727 :—"Yesterday we received a Letter from Edwd. Stephenson Esqr. Chief &c. Council of Cossimbuzar Dated the 30th Ultimo advising of the Nabob's Death and that Soufrage Cawn has assumed the administration and set strong Guards over all the great Zamindars."

Two years before Murshid Kuli Khan had built a mosque at Katra, about a mile to the east of his palace and under the stairs leading up to its terrace, trodden every day by the feet

68. Consultation, 12th June, 1727.



of the faithful, he was buried. The mosque itself is now in ruins. The cells where once seven hundred pious Mussulmen chanted the Koran, have vanished. But the tomb of the founder of Murshidabad is still carefully tended. It receives its offerings of flowers. The Koran is read there. In the minds of men Murshid Kuli Khan is now the Zinda Pir, the living saint, who protects them from cholera.

## 4.

It had been the dearest wish of Murshid Kuli Khan that his grandson, Sarfaraz Khan, should succeed him. But, as we have seen, Sarfaraz Khan had to contend with a formidable rival in the person of his father, Shuja-ud-daula, who had married the daughter of Murshid Kuli Khan. Shuja-ud-daula formed his plans with the greatest skill. His agents at Delhi won over the Emperor to his side. He despatched trusty men in small numbers and by different roads to Murshidabad with orders to be in readiness for his arrival. He established a secret post between Cuttack and Delhi so that he might receive the farman he expected from the Emperor as expeditiously as possible and also obtain authentic news from Murshidabad. As the rainy season was approaching, when the roads would become impassable, he collected a vast number of boats and boatmen to convey him and his army to Murshidabad. As soon as the news was brought that Murshid Kuli Khan had but a few days to live he left Cuttack. In the neighbourhood of Midnapore he received the Emperor's farman appointing him Governor of Bengal and pushed on for Murshidabad. On his arrival in the city he proceeded at once to Murshid Kuli Khan's hall of audience, caused his patent to be read, ascended the masnad and received the congratulations and customary offerings of the chief men. Sarfaraz Khan was at his country-seat near the city when the sound of the kettledrums and other instruments of music announced to his astonished ears the presence of the new Nawab. His courtiers and military officers whom he summoned in haste were all of the opinion that resistance was useless and recommended him to submit. Accordingly the young man "left his princely retinue behind ; and taking only a few servants, he advanced briskly ; and whether he

would or not, he kissed his father's feet, presented his nuzur, congratulated him on his accession, and dropped every thought of dispute and contention." Such is the account given in the *Seir Mutaqherin*. Another account states that Sarfaraz Khan received more timely notice of his father's approach and marched out of Murshidabad to oppose him but his grandmother, Murshid Kuli Khan's widow, who had great influence over him, induced him to refrain from fighting and submit to his father.<sup>69</sup>

According to the *Seir Mutaqherin* Fateh Chand had wished well to Shuja-ud-daula in his efforts to become Nawab. As soon as Shuja-ud-daula ascended the masnad he made Fateh Chand one of his confidential advisers. These are the only clues we have to Fateh Chand's conduct during these events. Obviously if Fateh Chand had openly supported Shuja-ud-daula he would have exposed himself to grave danger but it seems legitimate to conclude that he did not use his influence at Delhi in favour of Sarfaraz Khan and it has been suggested before that this was probably the reason why all Murshid Kuli Khan's efforts on behalf of his grandson failed. The point is of some importance in the light of after events. There was no question of hereditary right involved so that there appears to have been no reason why Fateh Chand should have favoured the father more than the son unless he distrusted the character of the latter and his fitness for the government.

In the astonishing success that had attended all the measures of Shuja-ud-daula we can trace the workmanship of two able men who had already aided their master to obtain a great reputation as Governor of Orissa.<sup>70</sup> These two men—Alivardi Khan and Haji Ahmad—were brothers. Their mother was related to Shuja-ud-daula. Another trusted servant who accompanied Shuja-ud-daula to Murshidabad was Rai Alam Chand. He had been his Diwan in Orissa and though Sarfaraz Khan held the title in Bengal and Alam Chand was nominally Deputy Diwan in reality all the toil and responsibilities of the office fell upon him. These three men and Jagat Seth Fateh Chand were selected by Shuja-ud-daula to form his Council.<sup>71</sup>

69. *Riyazu-s-salatin*, p. 288.

70. *Seir Mutaqherin*, Vol. I, pp. 298, 299.

71. *Seir Mutaqherin*, Vol. I, p. 302.

They became his chief ministers and advised him on all the measures of his government. A year or two afterwards Alivardi Khan was made Governor of Behar but the remaining three may be looked upon as the real rulers of Bengal until the death of Shuja-ud-daula.

One of the first acts of Shuja-ud-daula as Nawab gave proof of his humanity and love of justice. In the time of Murshid Kuli Khan torture and imprisonment had been the lot of those zamindars who failed in the payment of the revenue that had been assessed on their lands. Shuja-ud-daula found many of them in prison when he became Nawab. Those who were innocent of fraud were at once set free. The rest had to give a written promise that they would make their payments regularly in future. Then they were given robes of honour according to their rank and dismissed to their homes with injunctions to transmit the revenue through the agency of Jagat Seth Fateh Chand.<sup>72</sup> Shuja-ud-daula had no reason to regret his clemency. "Over and above the profits of Jagirs and fees on warehouses and factories, he easily raised one krur and fifty laks of rupees, which he remitted to the Imperial Treasury through the Banking Agency of Jagat Seth Fateh Chand."<sup>73</sup>

## 5

During the Government of Shuja-ud-daula a serious dispute arose between the Company and Jagat Seth Fateh Chand. On the 15th April, 1730, John Stackhouse, the Chief of the factory at Cassimbazar, and his Council, informed the President at Calcutta that their broker, Kantu, had absconded and their trade was consequently at a standstill, that it was impossible to remedy matters by making contracts with their merchants direct for their broker owed Jagat Seth a large sum of money and he had persuaded the merchants to refuse to make any agreements with the Company until his debt was paid. Whether their broker returned or not they saw no prospect of carrying on their business unless Fateh Chand was satisfied.<sup>74</sup>

72. Seir Mutaqherin, Vol. I, pp. 303, 304. Riyazu-s-salatin, p. 289.

73. Riyazu-s-salatin, p. 289.

74. Consultation, 28th April, 1730.

A few days later the broker was induced to return and an examination was made into his accounts. It was found that he owed Jagat Seth and other merchants Rs. 245,000 and was responsible to the Company for Rs. 133,000 besides. To meet these liabilities he placed in the hands of the Company securities and property to the value of Rs. 272,000.<sup>75</sup>

Jagat Seth sent a demand for the money owing to him by Kantu to Stackhouse who desired him "to permit a Company's servant to copy the notes and papers deposited in his hands by Kantu." "Whatever the deposited notes are," replied Jagat Seth, "I lent the money to the Company. When you will promise to discharge them I will produce them." This statement defines the issue from Jagat Seth's point of view. He had lent the money to Kantu as the Company's agent, the money had been applied by Kantu to the Company's business and Jagat Seth looked to the Company to make it good. This was confirmed by Kantu who, on being examined, stated that when he contracted for the whole amount of the Company's investment for the year he had in his possession promissory notes received from sundry persons to the value of Rs. 72,000 only but Fateh Chand had "so much confidence in him that whatever sum he told him a note was for, he let him have the money."<sup>76</sup> On the other hand the Company's servants argued that when they borrowed money they gave obligations for it under their own hands.

Failing to get satisfaction at Cassimbazar Jagat Seth wrote a letter to the President at Calcutta "the purport of which was that Contoo was indebted to him Rs. 215,000, on which affair he had sent his gomastah Jabeendas to John Stackhouse Esqr. Chief of Cossimbuzar, with the account who told the gomastah that Contoo's accounts were made up and sent to Calcutta and he would take care to pay him shortly : but he now observes within these twenty days we have greatly deviated from our usual honour and punctuality ; however as we have made up accounts with our gomastah Contoo, he doubts not we are so well versed in mercantile affairs as to see him paid."<sup>77</sup>

75. Consultation, 4th May, 1730.

76. Consultation 25th May, 1730.

77. Ibid.

Meanwhile Fateh Chand had submitted a proposal to the Chief at Cassimbazar. Let the Company, he said, give him a promissory note for the whole amount of Kantu's effects (Rs. 272,000) and he would immediately advance the Company's proportion, amounting to about Rs. 80,000 to them and also satisfy the other creditors of Kantu. By this arrangement he would lose Rs. 50,000 and to indemnify him against this loss Kantu was to give him a note for that amount. Under no circumstances could the payment of this note be demanded of the Company, but it was to be paid by Kantu himself as soon as he was able to do so. To enable Kantu to do this however, it was essential that he should continue to be the Company's broker and the arrangement would also be profitable to the Company for they could stop the *dasturi*<sup>78</sup> Kantu received from the merchants until the balance which would still be owing to the Company was paid off. Stackhouse replied that he had no power to agree to Jagat Seth's terms and the Council at Calcutta ignored them.<sup>79</sup>

Jagat Seth now appealed to the Nawab who ordered Haji Ahmad to see that he was paid. Guards were placed on the Company's *vakil* and when the English sent him to Haji Ahmad to enquire why he proceeded "so roughly on Futtichund's instigation" Haji Ahmed replied "that Futtichund's estate was esteemed as the King's treasure and the Nabob was resolved to see him satisfied". He strongly advised the English to accommodate the matter to prevent an open rupture with the Nawab.<sup>80</sup>

A week later the Nawab was very angry with Haji Ahmad because he had failed to get the money, confined the English *vakil*, and declared that the English must satisfy Fateh Chand's demands out of Kantu's effects which were in their hands. All the arguments the Company's servants could offer were ineffectual "the Mutsuddies alleging he was our servant and as he acknowledges the debt we must be answerable for it

78. *Dasturi* "that which is customary." That commission or percentage on the money passing in any cash transaction which, with or without acknowledgement or permission, sticks to the fingers of the agent of payment." Hobson Jobson, p. 333.

79. Consultation, 2nd June, 1730.

80. *Ibid.*

and Futtichund says he will stand to the Nabob's determination at all hazards."<sup>81</sup>

The President and Council met on the 9th June to consider these tidings and resolved "that we write to the Chief and Council of Cossimbuzar acquainting them we are willing to come into any reasonable proposals and that if Futtichund will pay or give security for the Honourable Company's proportion, we will deliver Contoo's effects or be accountable for what they produce to him but as Contoo has behaved himself in so vile a manner we cannot in justice to our Hon'ble Employers continue him in a post of so great trust, and at the same time send an Arizdast<sup>82</sup> to the Nabob and write a letter to Futtichund desiring our business be no longer impeded."<sup>83</sup>

These letters were not sent immediately as the President and Council were reluctant to enter into the quarrel directly. They hoped that their people at Cassimbazar would be able to induce Jagat Seth to take a dividend of Kantu's estate without insisting that Kantu should be retained as the Company's broker. On the 18th June, however, they heard that Jagat Seth's gomastah gave them no hope that his master would agree to this proposal as the dismissal of Kantu would mean the loss of a large sum of money to him. They heard, too, that two substantial merchants to whom the post of broker had been offered in succession had each refused to accept it giving as their reason that it would be impossible to carry on the Company's investment until the dispute with Fateh Chand was accommodated. In addition to this they heard that the Nawab was threatening to put an entire stop to their trade unless they satisfied Jagat Seth and the Company's servants at Dacca reported that the dispute was likely to stop all their business at that place.

The Council met on the 22nd and resolved to send the arzdast to the Nawab setting forth their grievances and desiring that he would oblige Fateh Chand to take only his proportion of Kantu's effects, that their vakil might be released and that they might be permitted to carry on their business as

81. Consultation 9th June, 1730.

82. A memorial.

83. Consultation 9th June, 1730.

usual. "We are sensible," the resolution went on to say, "if the Nabob should reject this we shall then be obliged to come to a quarrel and our business be stopped for some time which is the reason we have hitherto avoided it, but finding we have no other way left but this or to comply with Futtichund's demand in continuing Contoo our broker, we have resolved on the first which we take to the least evil of the two, for should we admit of Contoo's being continued broker, he would always be subject to Futtichund as being greatly indebted to him, and it's very apparent to us that Futtichund must have some extraordinary views by being so strenuous in his behalf in which our Hon'ble Masters may be great sufferers in the end, though it is urged by Futtichund's and Contoo's friends that the intent of his design to continue Contoo broker is with a view of paying in time all his creditors with the dustore of one rupee nine annas per cent., he annually receives of the merchants on the investment, to which we answer that the annual dustore which he is to receive cannot at most amount to more than 120,000 rupees, which as he is to be esteemed at the Durbar and the country around as our broker, he is obliged to live up to that character and the numerous family depending upon him will make that amount barely sufficient to defray his expenses so that the hopes given his creditors would be entirely frustrated and our Hon. Masters' affairs still subject to the same inconveniences as before and liable to be stopped on any creditor's complaining so that it appears to us that Futtichund's view of imposing Contoo on us for a broker is to reimburse himself by some methods with the merchants in making us pay dearer for our silk than it may be bought for by others which will be to the disadvantage of our Hon. Masters and our trade in general."<sup>84</sup>

The arzdest was sent to the Nawab and a letter to Jagat Seth. The latter having read his letter sent it back without answer.<sup>85</sup> The Nawab's reply to Governor Deane is the earliest extant document, with the exception of the Emperor's farman, in which the title of Jagat Seth is found. It is appended to the Bengal Consultation of the 6th July, 1730, and runs as follows :

84. Consultation, 22nd June, 1730.

85. Consultation, 10th July, 1730.

"I have received your Arisdast by which I understand that when the Company's Agents have occasion to borrow money, they always give obligations under their hands, that your broker Contoo at your factory at Cossimbazar is indebted to several Merchants and that on a complaint made by them to me Peons were put on your Vackeel Russick Loll.

Juggutseat hath set forth that for these twelve years past he has dealt with your factory at Cossimbazar by means of Contoo to the amount of upwards of fifty laak of Rupees and according to the custom of Merchants have (*sic*) always kept regular books by which books it appears there is a balance due of Rupees 215,000 for which Sum Contoo has made over Rupees 2,72,500 that is owing him by the Company's People ; it is well-known to every one that the Europeans are upright and just, now if you are indebted to Juggutseat the aforesaid Sum I would have you pay it without any Demur, but if there is any impediment deliver Contoo up here that the affair may be ended by arbitrators."

The English now made strenuous endeavours to win friends among the Nawab's ministers. "A new patron" was sought in the person of the Nawab's son, Sarfaraz Khan, to whom they presented a horse that he had desired for some time and for which he had made an offer of Rs. 900. They reminded Haji Ahmad and Rai Alam Chand of the assurances of friendship they had given the Company and expressed surprise that with such powerful friends they had not found more favour with the Nawab. But the two ministers could give them no hope of support in the present disputes. "The Nawab," they said, "has such a regard for Futtichund that it is out of our power to serve you in opposition to him." All they could do was to advise the English to make up the dispute with Fateh Chand as well as they could.<sup>86</sup>

Meanwhile "two considerable men" of Murshidabad had come forward as mediators and made proposals which, they gave the Company's servants at Cassimbazar reason to hope, would accommodate matters. "Kantu's assets," they said, "are worth Rs. 272,000. Let the Company reserve Rs. 80,000 as their own share, then appoint a new broker and hand over



to this broker the remaining Rs. 192,000 to satisfy Fateh Chand and the merchants." In forwarding the proposal to Calcutta the Company's servants at Cassimbazar desired the President and Council to empower them to put an end to their tedious dispute and added "One thing they presume to offer their opinion on—that it will be of very ill consequence if Contoo's petition is carried to the Durbar."<sup>87</sup>

This petition of Kantu's which was enclosed in the letter from Cassimbazar formed a new complication. Kantu asserted that a former chief of the Cassimbazar factory, Mr. Stephenson, had extorted large sums of money from him and that was the cause of his insolvency. According to Kantu the total amount extorted by Mr. Stephenson amounted to Rs. 175,000 and his banian had Rs. 7,000 besides. "You are my masters," he pleaded, "what I tell you is truth, his two banians Hurrykissen and Suddanand can witness this as well as their books. It is not in six months but in three years I have been undone and being pressed in credit I borrowed this money of Futtichund."<sup>88</sup> An enquiry was made into the matter which after languishing for some time was dropped and no definite pronouncement appears to have been made by the Company on Kantu's assertions. They were probably correct.

On the 21st July the Council met and decided to reject the proposals of the mediators. They argued that Kantu's estate amounted to no more than Rs. 272,000, therefore, as Kantu's debt to them was Rs. 133,000 a loss of Rs. 53,000 would arise if the Company advanced Rs. 192,000. Besides this arrangement assumed that Kantu's effects would produce the sum they were valued at whereas "on a very moderate calculation" a loss of Rs. 50,000 should be allowed "on his balances at the aurungs and adventures abroad." Therefore the proposal "would give Contoo's whole estate to Futtichund and leave the Company and the other merchants to whom Contoo is indebted quite in the lurch."<sup>89</sup> As the Company's servants at Cassimbazar pointed out, the Council had misunderstood the proposal. The person to be appointed as broker was to satisfy both Fateh

87. Consultation, 20th July, 1730.

88. Ibid.

89. Consultation, 21st July, 1730.

Chand and the other merchants with Rs. 192,000 and Rs. 80,000 in full was reserved for the Company. It was true that the Council would have to run the risk that Kantu's assets might not be realised in full but they had Kantu's positive assurances that his effects could not bring in less than they had been valued at.

Meanwhile all parties at Murshidabad and Cassimbazar were anxiously awaiting the Company's decision. The Company's servants at the latter place despatched another letter on the 24th urging the Council to come to some resolution concerning the dispute. Their affairs were in an extremely unsettled state, none of the Nawab's officers would espouse their cause, after much persuasion their merchants had agreed to take bullion in payment of their customary advances but the sale of this bullion had been immediately stopped by Fateh Chand, Fateh Chand himself was "also very uneasy to hear the result of your determination," Haji Ahmad was demanding from them every day a reply to the Nawab's letter and the Nawab was full of anger at the delay and was threatening them with his revenge if they refused to satisfy Fateh Chand.<sup>90</sup>

With the arrival of the Council's decision the quarrel assumed a more acute form. On the 5th August the Chief and Council at Cassimbazar reported:—"They have advised Futtichand that the mediators' proposals had been rejected and that the terms formerly proposed were the only means left to satisfy him to which he replied in passion that he wanted not power to recover his whole debt and that we should feel the effects of his resentment." For a time, however he had no heart to pursue the quarrel. "Futtichand keeps his house," proceeds the letter from Cassimbazar, "on account of his son's death. In three or four days he will appear abroad when should he persist in his unjust demand and the Government espouse his cause they desire to know if they shall put our former orders in execution of withdrawing their factory."<sup>91</sup>

But before taking this extreme measure the English made further attempts to end the dispute. The President had replied

90. Consultations, 28th July, 1st August, 1730.

91. Consultation, 10th August, 1730.

to the Nawab's letter with the only result, as they heard on the 14th August, that the Nawab insisted on Fateh Chand, receiving satisfaction "esteeming his money the King's"<sup>92</sup> and threatened to stop their Patna fleet. On the 21st the Chief and Council at Cassimbazar resolved "to send for the merchants and advise them to go in a body to Futtichund and endeavour to persuade him to take his proportion of Contoo's effects, otherwise we shall quit our factory, they will also order the Duhoy to be given and the Nabob informed of their resolution and if they receive an unsatisfactory answer they shall make the best of their way to Calcutta leaving the factory to the charge of Harrykissen their warehouse banian. They heartily wish this proceeding may bring Futtichund to reason but if it fails they lament their misfortune in finding all their endeavours to accommodate this unhappy affair frustrated."<sup>93</sup> This attempt was fruitless, and when an application made on the 22nd to the Diwan Rai Alam Chand, Haji Ahmad and Jagat Seth received an unsatisfactory answer the English left the factory.<sup>94</sup>

Just before they left the Nawab sent for the English vakil "and asked him why they wanted to go away who told him the reasons for it, to which the Nawab replied: Futtichand must be satisfied, but if they continued a resolution so contrary to their interests, they might go if they pleased and he with them, so ordered the vackeel to be released."<sup>95</sup>

On the 23rd the Company's servants arrived at Cuddalore. Here they were visited by Coja Owan, "a noted Armenian," who desired them to wait at Cuddalore while he went to Fateh Chand and tried to bring about a settlement. They asked the Council to give them discretionary power to make up the affair and decided to wait for the Council's answer in order "to prevent, if possible, the ill consequences that according to their opinion will inevitably attend their going down to Calcutta for as we are assured by everybody if resentment is carried so far the Government will come to no terms and they need not say how much our Hon. Master's interests will be prejudiced

92. Consultation, 17th August, 1730.

93. Consultation, 24th August, 1730.

94. Consultation, 25th August, 1730.

95 Ibid.

thereby." The Council, however, met on the 25th and determined to stand by their former resolution.<sup>96</sup>

On the 26th Mr. Halsey, one of the Company's servants at Cassimbazar, arrived in Calcutta bringing fresh proposals and on the 8th September John Stackhouse, the chief of the Cassimbazar factory, followed but whether accompanied by the rest of the English merchants is uncertain. That the Company decided to offer new terms to Jagat Seth was probably due to his representations. On the 9th the Council met and agreed "that Mr. John Stackhouse etc. Gentlemen do get themselves ready to return to Cossimbuzar and that they endeavour to carry on the Investment to the best of their power and in order to satisfy Futtichund they are ordered to offer him one hundred seven thousand five hundred rupees four annas being eight annas per rupee on his debt according to the most just calculation we can make of what Contoo's effects will produce, Agreed further that Contoo be displaced and that Burradutt, a substantial merchant at Cossimbazar who is proposed by Mr. Stackhouse be appointed broker in his room since the Company's affairs cannot be carried on without having a person to act in that station."<sup>97</sup>

Before the end of September John Stackhouse and his party were back at Cassimbazar. Jagat Seth Fateh Chand seems to have held scornfully aloof and made no demand upon them for his money and so the Company's servants decided not to mention the offer they were authorised to make to him until they received directions from the Council to do so.<sup>98</sup> Much to their surprise, however, Burradutt declined to be their broker and when, on the 3rd October, they sent the English wakil to the Durbar to make representations on the subject of the Ostenders they were told by Haji Ahmad that the matter could not be discussed till Fateh Chand was satisfied.<sup>99</sup>

Negotiations were then entered upon with Fateh Chand and on the 22nd October the Chief and Council at Cassimbazar reported that "they had finished the affair with Futtichund for one hundred and thirty thousand rupees which they hope

96. Ibid.

97. Consultation, 9th September, 1730.

98. Consultation, 5th October, 1730.

99. Consultation, 8th October, 1730.

will be agreeable and that the affair might be managed to the Hon'ble Company's credit, it was ended by a visit from Futtichund who promised to befriend them on all occasions and for the present has undertaken to procure them admission to the Nabob and an order for the general currency of our business."<sup>100</sup>

Before this Jagat Seth had returned the promissory notes Kantu had deposited in his hands and also given the Company an acquittance, a translation of which was appended to the Consultation of the 28th October, 1730, and runs as follows:—

"I Juggutseat do hereby decare that all Accounts between me and Contoo the English Broker at Cossimbuzar are accomplished and fully discharged by Mr. John Stackhouse Chief &ca Council at that Factory so that I have no further demands on the English Company or Contoo their Broker This being their discharge.

Dated 20th October, 1730."

Fateh Chand carried out his promise at least in part. On the 6th November he introduced Messrs. Stackhouse and Russell to the Nawab "who received them with great civility and assured them of his favour to the English on all occasions."<sup>101</sup>

It is difficult to blame either of the parties to this quarrel. On the one hand Jagat Seth was convinced that in dealing with Kantu he was dealing with the Company and so great was his confidence in the Company that in his transactions with Kantu he even neglected the ordinary precautions of his profession. On the other hand it was impossible for Governor Deane to accept responsibility for money borrowed without his express authority. Whether it was wise of Governor Deane to reject the proposal of the mediators is more doubtful. He knew the power of Jagat Seth at Murshidabad, he was aware of the services the banker had already rendered the Company in the disputes that had arisen with the Nawab, he had only to turn back a few years to find recorded in the minutes of the meetings of his Council the hope of the Company's servants at Cassimbazar that he would take care that Jagat Seth did not suffer for his efforts on the Company's behalf and it must have been obvious to him that, in refusing to agree with his adversary

100. Consultation, 28th October, 1730.

101. Consultation, 9th November, 1730.

quickly and carrying on the quarrel relentlessly to the bitter end, he was inflicting a severe loss on Jagat Seth which would rankle in his mind and alienate him from the Company. If Governor Deane congratulated himself on getting out of the business cheaply he was to find that, in reality, he had made a bargain which was to cost the Company dear and end in bitter mortification to himself. Jagat Seth had for the present acquiesced in his loss, but after events showed that he was determined that the Company should make it good when a favourable opportunity arose and the opportunity presented itself with startling rapidity. During the course of the quarrel Jagat Seth had been pressing in his demands on the Dacca factory for the money owing to him there and the Company's servants at Dacca had been obliged to draw a bill of exchange on the President and Council at Calcutta to settle the account. The following extract from the Cash Account for January 1731 records the payment of this bill:—

By Dacca Factory paid Futtichund Anunchund a Bill of Exchange drawn by the Chief and Council there ...	30,000
Batta 14''6''5 p.c. . . . .	4,320

34,320

Later in the same year there is evidence of the altered relation between Jagat Seth and the Company. On the 13th May the Chief and Council at Cassimbazar were in want of money and compelled to write to Calcutta for a supply "Futtichund not caring to lend any."<sup>102</sup>

In September Governor Deane was to find how unwise he had been in alienating Jagat Seth and how useless the Company's "new patron," Sarfaraz Khan, was in comparison with him. On the 21st the Company's servants at Cassimbazar reported that "a very unlucky accident had happened which they were afraid would give them much trouble." A party of men conducting boats laden with goods to Calcutta had quarrelled with the guards at the chauki of Barrigana on the Malda river, killed two of them and wounded a third. One dead body was brought to Murshidabad "and laid at the Nabob's door." The Nawab sent for the English wakil and in a violent

102. Consultation, 24th May, 1731.

passion told him "that if the English were permitted to act in such a manner and kill the King's subject at their pleasure he could not be easy in his Government." All endeavours to pacify him were fruitless and the English at Cassimbazar feared that the affair would involve them in considerable expense.<sup>103</sup>

Within a fortnight the dispute had developed into a general attack on the Company. The Company's servants were charged with abusing the privileges they enjoyed under the farman of the Emperor Farruksiyar. It was alleged that their Indian merchants were not content with providing goods ordered by the English but traded largely on their own account under permits obtained from the Company. The Company, besides, had not applied to the reigning Emperor for a confirmation of their farman nor had they made him a present. Therefore, declared the Nawab, they would have to pay customs on all their trade from the beginning of the Emperor's reign and he had received an order from the Emperor to that effect.<sup>104</sup>

While the English were endeavouring to get a petition presented to the Nawab by means of Sarfaraz Khan another unfortunate accident occurred at Murcha. A sergeant and two soldiers in charge of boats quarrelled with the guard at that place with the result that one sepoy was wounded while the sergeant was killed and his two soldiers, one severely wounded, were made prisoners. The sergeant's head was cut off and sent to Murshidabad and the two men were also sent there in chains.<sup>105</sup>

On the 20th October the Chief and Council at Cassimbazar reported that in spite of all their efforts to find out some means of accommodating the dispute the officers at the Durbar were daily devising new measures to molest them, their vakil was refused admittance to the Nawab and when that servant of the Company enquired of Haji Ahmad if a handsome present would procure him an interview Haji Ahmad "replied very shortly the order from Court was of too great consequence to be dispensed with for a trifle."

"They are well assured from several persons," the letter from Cassimbazar continued, "that Futtichund is at the bottom

103. Consultation, 27th September, 1731.

104. Consultation, 11th October, 1731.

105. Consultation, 13th October, 1731.

of this affair and they have too much reason to think that it cannot be made up without his concurrence. Two days since they sent a message to him, desiring to know if he would be once more their friend and undertake their cause, he coldly answered he would not be their enemy and at last said they might send a trusty servant to him, whom he would introduce to the Duan and chief mutsuddys but he could not speak directly to the Nabob in our behalf having engaged to the contrary. In short they are given to understand that Futtichund expects to be reimbursed for the loss he sustained by Contoo, though he will not ask it, till when he will on every occasion be a stickler against us, but if they satisfy him in that they may be assured of a staunch and powerful friend. This cannot be done without a very great expense but they believe there is no cheaper way left to accommodate matters and they are of an opinion, if they intend to prevent an absolute rupture with the Government that the only safe method will be by Futtichund's means and if they do not secure his friendship, whatever they spend at the Durbur will not secure them from fresh insults."

The President and Council were both to admit that the fruits of the hard bargain they had driven with Fateh Chand had been brought home to them in this startling fashion and it was only step by step that the truth was forced upon them 'Give Fateh Chand hopes of making up his loss by Kantu,' they wrote to Cassimbazar on the 23rd October, "and endeavour by that means to get him to accomodate the affair entirely, but do not offer anything till we know whether we can possibly consent to the demand."<sup>106</sup>

Before this letter reached Cassimbazar the Council received another letter from thence to the effect that the Nawab expected present of a lac of rupees for the Emperor "besides something for himself" and that if this were refused he would insist on the order from Court being carried out. Then the Council went a stage further and on the 25th October directed their servants at Cassimbazar "to tell Futtichund that they have a power to treat with him and so to know from him the certain demand for finishing this affair and while they are negotiating

106. Consultation, 23rd October, 1731.



to acquaint us what it is with all expedition, but to conclude nothing without further orders."<sup>107</sup>

On the 29th the Council received a reply to their letter of the 23rd in which the Company's servants at Cassimbazar stated "they have sent a message to Futtichund desiring him very pressingly to let them know what sum would be sufficient to accommodate our dispute and giving him hopes of satisfaction for himself in case he will be our staunch friend to which he replied—that whenever they shall be empowered to treat he will use all his interest with the Nabob to make up the affair as much in our favour as possible, but till then he shall not be able to do anything, so that they are still in the same uncertainty they were before and they are well assured that every day's delay will widen the breach as well as retard getting in the investment. So they hope we will immediately come to some resolution."

The Council met on the 30th and resolved to permit John Stackhouse at Cassimbazar to offer Rs. 40,000 to the Nawab and Rs. 5,000 to his Diwan for the confirmation of their privileges. If more were peremptorily insisted on he might increase the offer by five or ten thousand rupees but go no farther. As for the order from Court they believed it to be fictitious but should they be obliged to give something to the Emperor Stackhouse was to insist on a confirmation of all their grants under the royal seal.<sup>108</sup>

On the following day more serious news came from Cassimbazar. The English there had made daily applications to Jagat Seth and, as directed, given him hopes of satisfaction for himself if he would undertake their cause "but he has always given them the same answer as at first." Jagat Seth's chief servant, Rupchand, however, had informed them that his master would never heartily espouse their interest till they gave him an obligation for Rs. 50,000 to be paid when the dispute had been accommodated. "Delays will be of the utmost ill consequence," the Council were warned, "if we intend to prevent a war for the Nabob is already greatly irritated and begins to threaten that since the English are so stout he will try their courage." Finally

107. Consultation, 25th October, 1731.

108. Consultation, 30th October, 1731.

the Council were urged to take into their serious consideration whether it would not be better to make up the dispute at once, even at a great expense, than run the risk of being brought to a shameful compliance in the end which would be the inevitable consequence "for the Nabob is very rash and hasty (far Unlike Jafferaw) not at all regarding what he does to obtain his ends let the country suffer ever so much by it."

On the 1st November another letter arrived from Cassimbazar in which the Company's servants there stated that "they had an answer from Futtichund who far from complying with their request grows angry and says they only dally with him to no purpose, that we are not disputing for a trifle but the security of our Phirmand which the Nabob is about to deprive us of, and advising against further delays." The only way out was to invest them with power to finish the affair. All the hopes they had placed in Sarfaraz Khan had been disappointed as they found he stood in awe of his father.

Thereupon the President and Council gave way entirely and agreed "that we write the gentlemen at Cossimbazar to make as cheap a bargain as they can with Futtichund but whatever they give him must be as an acknowledgment of his good service in this affair and not as payment of any demand or debt."<sup>109</sup>

On receipt of this order, Mr. Halsey, one of the factors at Cassimbazar, paid two visits to Jagat Seth. "The first time little could be drawn from him but at the next visit, which was last night, he opened his mind more freely and said that matters being carried so far they must not flatter themselves with hopes of getting over this affair immediately because it is actually represented at Court, and that the Nabob has it not in his power to confirm our privileges if they would give him ever so much money. Wherefore he advised them as a friend that the best method they can take will be to endeavour to get all the guards removed and our people and goods cleared by giving a present to the Nabob which will also probably engage him to write to Court in our favour and afterwards to treat with him for a new Phirmaund which Futtichund said will be absolutely necessary for the future

currency of our business and as for himself they may depend on all his assistance." The Company's servants at Cassimbazar, however, informed the Council that the sum necessary to conclude the affair would far exceed that which they had been empowered by them to offer. The Council met on the 8th November and agreed "we find ourselves under an absolute necessity to give them full power to make it up on the best terms they can."<sup>110</sup>

With the assistance of Fateh Chand the English at Cassimbazar ascertained that the Nawab's terms were a lakh of rupees for the Emperor and another lakh for the Nawab. On payment of these sums the Nawab would permit their business to go on as usual and would represent their case to the Emperor in a favourable manner. "The sum demanded is very extravagant," wrote the merchants at Cassimbazar, "but considering the answers they have hitherto received from the Nabob and his Duan tending to nothing else than our punctual compliance with the King's orders or paying something equivalent (which would not be less than seven or eight laack of rupees) they intend to agree to it being persuaded they shall not be able to procure better terms nor should they have had this offer but by Futtichund's means."

On the 18th October the Chief and Council at Cassimbazar related how the dispute was finally settled. "To their great surprise," they said, "a new difficulty was started by the Duan Allumchand, who insisted on them signing an obligation to limit the number of the ships and many other articles which if they had agreed to would have been in effect giving up almost all our privileges. So they were obliged to apply to Futtichund, who by his interest with the Duan and other Mutsuddys prevailed with them to drop most of their demands and sent a paper to them (the English) which he said they must agree to that the Nabob might have something to write to the King in his own vindication for clearing our business. However they refused it, till he assured them that if they would not comply our affairs would be embroiled more than ever so seeing no other remedy they at last consented.

110. Consultation, 8th November, 1731.

"They send us a copy of the paper, which they sealed yesterday, in the presence of Futtichund who brought it to them himself by the Nabob's order, with Perwannas for taking off the guards and at the delivery of them he desired us not to be uneasy for that our Hon'ble Masters' affairs would go on again as usual and nothing more by this was required than that we should not trade in Bengal salt, beetlenut, and other commodities from one part of the country to another and engross any sort of goods to the prejudice of the King's subjects. He further told them they may depend on his best service in future, in which they believe he is sincere having now no demand upon them for old scores. They gave him a note for fifty thousand rupees for his good services according to our orders with which he seemed entirely satisfied. He has been of signal use in the accommodation of this dispute for instead of two laack of rupees they before advised of, he has finished it for one hundred and eighty thousand including the Duan's and officers' presents which amount to no less than thirty thousand so he has saved for them what they have given him."<sup>111</sup>

During the remaining years of the government of Shuja-ud-daula the English relied on the good services of Jagat Seth in times of difficulty. On the 30th April, 1733, a letter from Cassimbazar relates that the English wakil "waited on Juggutseat (the first recorded instance of the use of the title by the Company's servants) in connection with the affairs of the Company who, after hearing what the wakil had to say, went "in to the Nabob."<sup>112</sup> In July of the same year one of the Company's servants at Cassimbazar carried an arzdest from the President to Jagat Seth in order either to request him to deliver it to the Nawab "or to pursue such other means of doing it as he should advise them."<sup>113</sup> In January, 1735, when their broker was seized the English immediately despatched their wakil with letters to Rai Alam Chand, Haji Ahmad and Fateh Chand "remonstrating and desiring their assistance in our behalf."<sup>114</sup> In November, 1735, when

111. Consultation, 22nd November, 1731.

112. Consultation, 7th May, 1733.

113. Consultation, 23rd July, 1733.

114. Consultation, 22nd January, 1734-35.

Shuja-ud-daula followed the example of Murshid Kuli Khan and demanded a large sum of money as rent for the Calcutta settlement the aid of Jagat Seth was sought to accommodate the matter. The conclusion of this dispute was marked by a visit to the factory at Cassimbazar by Jagat Seth in the course of which "he was not wanting in his great professions for the interest of our Hon'ble Masters nor we in an occasional<sup>115</sup> and suitable address to so great a man." The payment of Rs. 40,000 which ended the dispute was made to the Nawab through Jagat Seth and the Nawab's perwannas were brought to the factory by Jagat Seth himself.<sup>116</sup>

It was during these years that a relation of Fateh Chand appeared at Murshidabad. This was Lalji, the son of Sadanand, who was a brother of Manik Chand. Kwajah Sarhad, who had figured prominently in the Surman embassy, had been promised, presumably in writing, a gratuity by the English if the embassy were successful in obtaining a farman from the Emperor and on this security he had borrowed a large sum of money from Sadanand. About the year 1734 Kwajah Sarhad died and Lalji obtained a letter from Court directing the Nawab to see that the debt was paid by the English. Fateh Chand naturally supported his cousin and so, too, did Haji Ahmad who was "glad of an opportunity to oblige Futtichund." The English held out for some time against the demand on the ground that Kwajah Sarhad had died greatly in debt to the Company but they were obliged to confess that the Armenian was to have had the gratuity promised him and directed Mr. Braddyll, the chief of the Cassimbazar factory, and his Council, "to compound this matter with Futtichund on the best terms they can, taking care that it does not appear to be given as his (Lalji's) due, but that we give this money purely to oblige Futtichund." On receipt of these orders the English at Cassimbazar sent their wakil "to sound Futtichund's intentions in relations to Logeesaw (Lalji saho) and to try what would satisfy him without making the first offer on their parts and to let him know whatever sum was given on this occasion was to please

115. "Appropriate to the occasion"?

116. Consultation, 21st June, 1736.

him and that we by no means allowed of Logeesaw's demand to be just." The vakil had two conferences with Fateh Chand at the second of which Lalji was present. "Logeesaw said the whole was his due but that he was willing to abate two or three thousand rupees upon which Futtichund told him that the English would not have stood out so long for so trifling a sum and desired him to propose something more reasonable. Logeesaw at length with great difficulty agreed to accept of fifteen thousand rupees and quitted the room when Futtichund advised the vaqueel to be easy for two or three days, so that they are in hopes it will be accommodated for less." A few days afterwards Fateh Chand sent for the vakil and acquainted him that he had reduced Lalji's demand of Rs. 10,000 and advised him at the same time to finish the affair promising to procure a full discharge from Lalji for his claim upon the Company. So the English at Cassimbazar wrote "it appearing to them that it will be impossible to make any further reduction they thought proper to direct the vacqueel to finish the affair which will cost in all about twelve thousand rupees, that is, ten thousand to Logeesaw and two thousand to some of his friends whom we are under an absolute necessity to oblige for their interest on this occasion."<sup>117</sup>

. During the government of Shuja-ud-daula the English continued to complain that Fateh Chand would suffer no one to buy silver but himself and that he fixed the price of silver and rupees as he thought proper. In 1736 an order was issued by the Government reducing the value of Madras and Arcot rupees which the English and French used in their transaction with Indian merchants and Fateh Chand was regarded as "the chief promoter of this order."<sup>118</sup> It seems that the revenues of the Murshidabad mint had fallen off greatly at this time and, according to Fateh Chand, this was owing to the fact that the English were importing less bullion than formerly and sending more of what they did import to Patna. Therefore he seems to have argued:—Discourage the use of foreign money and the result will be that the European nations will import more

117. Consultations, 19th August, 1734; 26th February, 1737; 10th March, 1737; 16th April, 1737.

118. Consultation, 13th December, 1736.

bullion to be coined into Murshidabad rupees and the mint will flourish again.

It is certainly true that the English at Cassimbazar reported to the Council at Calcutta that the best method of inducing Fateh Chand to support them in the efforts they were making to get the order rescinded was to sell him a quantity of bullion. Fifty chests of treasure were, accordingly, sent to Cassimbazar and on the 28th December, 1736, the English at Cassimbazar wrote "they sent the vacqueel to offer Futtichund the silver they had then received and at the same time to intercede with him for his interest to get the great loss of batta on Madras rupees taken off, who replied as follows; he could not at present take our silver but desired we would keep it a little while in the factory and he would let us know when it suited his conveniency. As to the batta of Madras rupees he said it was not a proper time to apply to the Nawab to have it taken off immediately but he hoped to effect it in a month and withal sent them word not to be uneasy for that if in the interim they should have occasions for four or five laack of rupees for the Company's use he would advance it for a month or two without interest."

The English merchants at Cassimbazar found out later that twelve of the chests were filled with Madras rupees and as they had represented to Fateh Chand that they were all full of bullion this caused them some anxiety for they wrote "though he (Fateh Chand) seems inclinable at present to be our friend they are apprehensive should he find them short in the quantity of silver it may make him think they have imposed upon him and of course disgust him, which as affairs now stand may be attended with ill consequence and they must request us to send much bullion as will make up the full quantity." The Council at Calcutta had no more bullion but sent to Madras for a supply<sup>119</sup> and in April 1737 twelve more chests arrived at Cassimbazar. Meanwhile in February the bullion at Cassimbazar had been sold to Fateh Chand "who allowed  $206\frac{3}{4}$  for 240 sicca weight the new Pillar Dollars and the Mexico at  $206\frac{1}{4}$ ."<sup>120</sup>

119. Consultation, 1st January, 1736-37.

120. Consultation, 7th February, 1736-37.

In May 1737 the Company sold 23 chests of treasure to Fateh Chand<sup>121</sup> but later in the year there was again "no appearance of business in the Mint."<sup>122</sup> The decrease in the revenue was so serious that the Diwan Rai Alam Chand was looking into the matter. He called the English vakil to him in private and asked him to procure a return of the amount of bullion imported by the English in the last years of the government of Murshid Kuli Khan and also during the period 1733 to 1736 and the amount of this that had been sent to Patna. The vakil tried to evade the request and, finding this unsuccessful, urged the danger of offending Fateh Chand. Rai Alam Chand replied that he would take care the English received no injury and would convince Fateh Chand that they were forced to comply with his request. "Futtichund likewise met the Vacqueel and told him, he knew the necessity we were under of obliging Allumchund and advised him by all means to do it."<sup>123</sup> The accounts were sent in September and the Diwan seemed well pleased with them.

Some of these incidents would lead one to suspect that an intrigue was going on behind the scenes aimed at Fateh Chand's monopoly of the mint. As far back as April when the English vakil went to see Fateh Chand in connection with Lalji's affair and took the opportunity of mentioning the loss the English were suffering from the order relating to Madras rupees "Futtichund told him, that it affected himself as much as anybody and that the order was originally levelled at him by the means of Chainray, Allumchund's Diwan (?) who represented there was a great deficiency in the revenue of the Mint occasioned by the want of bullion to coin and that he (Futtichund) had made several attempts to get the order revoked but in vain, that it must be a work of time and it would be our best way not to stir in it."<sup>124</sup> Perhaps the clue to the puzzle is to be found in the fact that at the end of the year the French had succeeded in obtaining a promise of a sanad for

121. 30th May, 1737.

122. Consultation, 26th September, 1737.

123. Consultation, 29th August, 1737.

124. Consultation, 16th April, 1737.



the use of the mint at a cost of Rs. 50,000 and by so doing had incurred the bitter enmity of Jagat Seth.<sup>125</sup>

All through 1737 the English were trying to get the order removed but so far were they from obtaining any success that a duty was imposed on all Madras and Arcot rupees coming into Bengal. They considered the French responsible for the issue of this order as they had been importing a large quantity of Arcot rupees into Bengal. "Their utmost endeavour," the Chief and Council at Cassimbazar wrote in October, "have not been wanting to get the order for laying an additional batta on Madras rupees suppressed, being sensible how great an encroachment it is on our Honble Masters' phirmaund, but that order Arcot rupees into Bengal. "Their utmost endeavour," (the Chief and Council) it seems impracticable to do anything in the affair till they have accommodated their disputes in regard to the Arcot rupees they have imported on all of which the Government demand custom to be immediately paid notwithstanding they are coined in one of the King's mints."<sup>126</sup> The French cleared their rupees of customs in December and in the same month obtained a promise of a sanad for coining their Arcot rupees at Murshidabad mint as has been already stated.

Meanwhile in September 1737 the Indian merchants trading with the English had complained that Jagat Seth would take Murshidabad siccas only in payment of the money they had borrowed from him or if they repaid their loans in other kinds of rupees they were accepted at a heavy discount with a consequent proportionate loss to them<sup>127</sup> and so when the English informed them in March 1738 that they expected them to take a part of the sum due to them in Madras rupees the merchants objected stating that "they should be great sufferers in it for the Government would oblige them to pay a duty of two and a half per cent. and they should be at a further loss in putting them off." "Upon this," wrote the Chief and Council at Cassimbazar, "we directed the broker to wait on Futtichund and acquaint him with this hardship and to solicit

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125. Consultation, 29th December, 1737.

126. Consultation, 11th October, 1737.

127. Consultation, 26th September, 1737.

his interest for the currency of them again. He told the broker the French had been the sole occasion of our complaint by agreeing to pay a custom on Madras and Arcot rupees, that it was not in his power to be of any service to us he himself not being exempted from this custom but that he was willing to take them at the rate of 106½ Madras rupees for 100 siccas which was half per cent. more than we could put them off for anywhere else." Even then the English would have incurred a loss and so the Madras rupees were returned to Calcutta.<sup>128</sup>

Thereupon the President wrote an arzdast to the Nawab declaring that the hindrance placed on the currency of their Madras rupees was an infringement of one of the principal articles of the farman granted by the Emperor Farrukhsiyar.<sup>129</sup> The arzdast was sent to Cassimbazar to be delivered to the Nawab but the Company's servants at that place, before delivering it, thought it necessary to sound Rai Alam Chand and Fateh Chand on the matter.<sup>130</sup> Fateh Chand promised his assistance but was doubtful whether the arzdast would do any good.<sup>131</sup> This proved true for when it was delivered to the Nawab through Fateh Chand and Rai Alam Chand the Chief and Council at Cassimbazar reported on the 19th April 1738 "the answer is our request cannot be granted, the duty on foreign rupees having been ordered from Court on account of the great deficiencies in the revenues of the mint and that it affected all the merchants in the country in common with us."<sup>132</sup>

The records contain several references to commercial transactions between the Company and Jagat Seth during the government of Shuja-ud-daula. On the 22nd May 1732 the Council resolved to procure a letter of credit for Rs. 150,000 on Jagat Seth's factory at Patna for the benefit of their servants there.<sup>133</sup> On the 15th December 1732 the English at Cassimbazar were ordered to give Jagat Seth the preference when they

128. Consultation, 2nd March, 1737-38.

129. Consultation, 7th March, 1737-38.

130. Consultation, 3rd April, 1738.

131. 13th April, 1738.

132. 15th May, 1738.

133. Consultation, 22nd May, 1732.

borrowed money in future and these orders were repeated in 1736.<sup>134</sup> On the 3rd March the Company's servants at Cassimbazar wrote that "They have taken up two hundred thousand rupees of Futtichund to carry on their business and shall give him the preference as we direct by borrowing what more they shall have occasion for of him."<sup>135</sup> On the 14th June the Council received a letter from Cassimbazar "inclosing a Bill of Exchange of Futtichund for two hundred and forty thousand siccas which is accepted" and on the 2nd March, 1738, the Company's servants at Cassimbazar borrowed Rs. 130,000.<sup>136</sup> On the 16th November 1738 a transaction of a different nature is recorded. "Futtichund by his Gomastah desires we will let him have sixty six pieces of red broadcloth and sixty six pieces of green ditto and we not having sufficient in the warehouse of ye popinjay.

"Agreed that we write to the gentlemen at Patna to deliver to his Gomastah there seven bales of the green broadcloth and to debit Account Current Calcutta for the same at fifty rupees per piece he being to account with us for the amount."<sup>137</sup> The Company's servants at Patna declared that Jagat Seth's gomastah trifled with them until the broadcloth had been disposed of to better advantage elsewhere."<sup>138</sup> "They are sorry," they wrote on the 27th February 1739, "Futtichund was disappointed in the broad-cloth but it was entirely his gomastah's fault and as affairs stand perhaps Futtichund may not be displeased at it."<sup>139</sup> This is perhaps an allusion to the last illness of the Nawab whose death was reported to the Council at Calcutta in a letter from Cassimbazar dated the 13th March, 1739.<sup>140</sup>

Shuja-ud-daula was Nawab of Bengal for about twelve years. On his deathbed he recognised his son, Sarfaraz Khan, as his successor, earnestly exhorting to place his confidence in

134. Consultations, 15th December, 1732; 24th July, 1736.

135. Consultation, 10th March, 1737.

136. Consultation, 2nd March, 1737-38.

137. Consultation, 16th November, 1738.

138. Consultation, 12th February, 1738-39.

139. Consultation, 12th March, 1738-39.

140. Consultation, 19th March, 1738-39.

Haji Ahmad, the Rai Raian Alam Chand and Jagat Seth Fateh Chand as he himself had done.<sup>141</sup>

Without presenting Shuja-ud-daula as a faultless character historians agree in praising him for his benignity of temper, his liberality, and impartial distribution of justice. He was no respecter of persons, 'fearful sparrow certain of finding in his bosom a shelter against the hawk's pursuit, flew towards him with a perfect reliance on his goodness.'<sup>142</sup> In the midst of Mahratta invasions and the convulsions which followed men looked back to his time as a golden age when Bengal really merited the title of "Paradise of Provinces" which it had received in former times. But it is equally true that Nawab Shuja-ud-daula was fond of ease and pleasure. It was upon his Council rather than upon him that the real burden of the government lay<sup>143</sup> and the testimony of historians to the general prosperity of the province is also a testimony to the merits and abilities of Haji Ahmad, the Rai Raian Alam Chand and Jagat Seth Fateh Chand.

## 6.

Sarfaraz Khan became Nawab without opposition at the beginning of March, 1739 and, paying heed to the last injunction of his father, chose as his chief ministers Haji Ahmad, the Rai Raian Alam Chand and Jagat Seth Fateh-Chand—the three men to whom had been entrusted the absolute administration of affairs under the late government.

Dark days had descended upon the Mughal Empire. Nadir Shah, the Persian King, had sacked Delhi and the Emperor was his captive. Before the end of March Sarfaraz Khan received orders from Delhi to proclaim Nadir Shah Emperor at Murshi-

141. Riyazu-s-salatin, p. 307.

142. Seir Mutaqherin, Vol. I, p. 349.

143. "Being fond of ease and pleasure, Nawab Shuja-ud-daula entrusted the duties of the Nizamat to a Council, composed of Haji Ahmad, Rai Alamchand Diwan and Jagat Seth Fateh Chand, whilst the Nawab himself indulged in pleasures." Riyazu-s-salatin, p. 291. "Dijagat seat . . . Hadji Ahmad . . . who with the Ray Rayan had had the absolute direction of affairs in the late administration." . . . Seir Mutaqherin, Vol. I, p. 353. "All occurrences disagreeable to this Nabob being kept very secret" Bengal Consultations, 3rd October, 1737.

dabad, to coin rupees in his name, and to keep the province quiet until the receipt of further orders.<sup>144</sup>

So the first rupees of Sarfaraz Khan were coined with the name of Nadir Shah inscribed upon them as the reigning Emperor. Under ordinary circumstances these rupees would have been superior in value to any passing current in Bengal but in these unsettled times the Nadir Shah rupees at once fell to the level of Arcot rupees which were inferior in value to Madras rupees. Men who had them were anxious to get rid of them and so when the English merchants at Cassimbazar went to Fateh Chand for money he refused to lend any unless they would take Nadir Shah rupees whereupon the Council at Calcutta directed them to borrow elsewhere. "We cannot think it proper," they wrote, "to take Sha Nadar's Siccas at the rate Futtichund offers them the loss being so very considerable."<sup>145</sup>

When, at the end of May, tidings came to Murshidabad that the Persian King had left Delhi and was returning to his own country the Government ordered the Nadir Shah scale to be broken and new ones to be made in the name of the old Emperor, Muhammad Shah.<sup>146</sup> Jagat Seth, however, does not appear to have got rid of all his Nadir Shah rupees at the end of July for on the 30th, when the Council wished to send bills of exchange for 10,000 sicca rupees to Dacca and applied to Jagat Seth's gomastah in Calcutta for the money, the gomastah informed the Council that he could not give them bills for the new siccas of Muhammad Shah without particular orders from his principals at Murshidabad. The gomastah wrote to Murshidabad and a favourable answer was received from thence for we find in the records under the 3rd August that "Futtichund's gomastah laid before the Board a Bill of Exchange on his house at Dacca for one hundred thousand sicca rupees of the twenty second year dated the 1st instant and payable twenty one days after date to the Chief &ca Council there. Agreed that we immediately inclose it to the Gentlemen at Dacca for the supply of their factory and

144. Bengal Consultation, 2nd April, 1739.

145. Bengal Consultation, 23rd April, 1739.

146. Bengal Consultation, 31st May, 1739.

that we give a note at interest for the same to Futtichund payable to him or order upon demand." On the 6th December "Futtichund's Gomastah demanding payment of our note to him for one hundred thousand rupees with the interest due thereon and desiring that part of it may be paid in bullion Agreed that the President do pay the same and that five chests of bullion be delivered out of the Treasury towards discharging it in the manner Futtichund desires."<sup>147</sup>

On the 24th March, 1740 the merchants at Dacca were again calling for money and the Council at Calcutta resolved to borrow two lakhs to supply their own wants and those of the factory at Dacca. In accordance with this resolution they place on record under date the 7th April "We took up at interest of Juggutseat Futtichund Anunchund one hundred twenty one thousand sicca rupees (sicca rupees 121,000) and gave our note for the same dated the 5th instant the money being then received into cash payable on demand with one percent. per mensem premium thereon which sum completes the two laack agreed to be taken up at interest." In the previous year the factory at Patna also had borrowed Rs. 25,000 of Jagat Seth's agent and given a bill of exchange drawn on the President and Council at Calcutta and "payable forty days after date to Juggut Seat Futtichund Ananchund or order in Calcutta." The bill was paid on the 30th July.<sup>148</sup>

During the last years of Shuja-ud-daula's government Haji Ahmad, whose brother, Alivardi Khan, had made himself independent Nawab of Behar, had grown more and more powerful at Murshidabad and had used his power to extort money from the English. He was now Sarfaraz Khan's "Prime Minister and great favourite"<sup>149</sup> and continued his attempts to extort money from the English. In May 1739 he demanded a large sum on the excuse that the English required a new farman to legalise their trade in Bengal. The Company's servants at Cassimbazar used their best endeavours to induce Haji Ahmad to lower his demand "and got Futtichund to make him a visit who said as much as he could on our be-

147. Bengal Consultations, 30th July, 1739; 3rd August, 1739; 6th December, 1739.

148. Bengal Consultations, 7th June, 1739; 30th July, 1739.

149. Bengal Consultations, 11th May, 1739.

half which was of great service and made Hadjee come down to ten thousand rupees which Futtichund acquainted them of and advised them to make up the affair directly since a delay would only disgust Hadjee the more and make him get the Nawab to trouble us. Hadjee also told their vaqueel that if they did not make up the affair immediately he would raise his demands." The Company, therefore, thought it advisable to pay this sum.<sup>150</sup>

In October 1739 Haji Ahmad notified to the three European nations in Bengal that Sarfaraz Khan had been confirmed Nawab of the three provinces and expected the customary present from them on the occasion. The English proposed to give the Nawab the same amount they had given his father but Haji Ahmad pointed out that the Nawab had been put to great expense in hiring forces to keep the country quiet and as they reaped the benefit of this he expected them to bear a proportion of the expense by making their present larger. Rs. 10,000 was the sum demanded with presents in addition for the Diwan and other officers. Besides this a visit was due from the new chief of the Cassimbazar factory and this meant a further present. "They have been endeavouring some time to reduce these demands," the English at Cassimbazar wrote on the 14th February, 1740. "but have not been able to do it so hope we will permit them to finish it as Futtichund and Allunchund advise them to make the visit directly." The Council at Calcutta authorised them to arrange for the present and visit to the Nawab on the terms mentioned if they could not reduce them lower and on 2nd March Mr. Eyre, the new chief at Cassimbazar, visited the Nawab.<sup>151</sup>

For more than a month after this the letters from Cassimbazar deal solely with the price of silk and other details of the Company's trade and then, without a word of warning, without a word of explanation of the reasons for it, we find that a revolution is in progress. Alivardi Khan has invaded Bengal and arrived at Monghyr. Turning to the Persian his-

150. Bengal Consultations, 7th June, 1739.

151. Bengal Consultations, 18th February, 1739-40; 6th March, 1739-40.

torians we learn that discord had arisen between the Nawab and his ministers with the result that within fifteen months after the accession of Sarfaraz Khan the semi-regal viceroyalty of Bengal had passed from the house of Murshid Kuli Khan for ever.

## 7

The main facts in connection with this revolution are sufficiently clear. Haji Ahmad, the Rai Raian Alam Chand and Jagat Seth Fateh Chand called in Alivardi Khan from Behar. Alivardi Khan invaded Bengal, Sarfaraz Khan was killed in the battle that followed and Alivardi Khan became Nawab. But difficulties arise as soon as we attempt to get a clear idea of the cause of the revolution and the motives of the chief actors in it. Even the actual progress of events is rendered perplexing by conflicting authorities. The character of Sarfaraz Khan is the subject of the most irreconcilable statements. According to some historians he was a ruler not unlike our own Edward the Confessor, according to others he was a hardened debauchee. A consideration of this matter will illustrate the difficulties confronting a writer who has to deal with this period of the history of Bengal and will, at the same time, have a direct bearing on the story of the life of Fateh Chand, for Sarfaraz Khan was alleged to have brought dishonour on his family. If Sarfaraz Khan was a man of unblemished moral character we shall be disposed to discredit the charge. If, on the other hand, we come to the conclusion that Sarfaraz Khan was a man sunk in sensuality we shall be disposed to credit it.

According to the Seir Mutaqherin Sarfaraz Khan "proved to be only a pious man addicted to the practices of devotion, and extremely regular in his stated prayers, he fasted three full months besides the blessed month of the Ramazan, and was scrupulous in the discharge of the several duties prescribed throughout the year ; but at the same time he proved greatly deficient in the keenness of discernment, and that extent of mind, so indispensably necessary in a sovereign Prince : his soul wholly engrossed by those little practices of religion, did not pay a sufficient attention to the affairs of state, and did not reach to those niceties and those qualifications so necessary



in a man of his station and rank."<sup>152</sup> So might some sarcastic thane of Earl Godwin have spoken of Edward the Confessor. The Riyazu-s-salatin says that Sarfaraz Khan "consecrated his life to winning the hearts of people and also sought for help and blessings from saints and hermits."<sup>153</sup> Eusuff Ali Khan, who strove to show that it was necessity and self-defence that forced Alivardi Khan to depose Sarfaraz Khan says "Sarfaraz Khan was a prince of exemplary virtue: for though he possessed every incitement to voluptuousness in addition to the season of youth, yet he was not addicted to sensual enjoyments: and during his short government, in the course of which I was constantly with him, I never beheld in his conduct even a tendency towards a vicious action. But, alas! he was ignorant of the arts of policy, and possessed not an address or manners to conciliate the world, so that he became a prey to the machinations of his enemies."<sup>154</sup>

Sarfaraz Khan had a very different reputation among the servants of the East India Company. According to Holwell "Independent power only increased the bad qualities, which had already taken too deep possession of Suffraaz Khan: his excesses in spirituous liquors and women, were beyond control and example; his insolence and impetuosity of temper became intolerable to all about him; principal officers were treated with insults and indignities."<sup>155</sup> Scrafton declares that Sarfaraz Khan "indulged in excessive debauchery even to that degree as to disorder his faculties, soon rendered himself odious to his people, and lost affections of those who might have supported him."<sup>156</sup> Orme says that he was "a man of mean abilities, and governed only by his vices." His profligacy increased with the means of indulgence: and his debaucheries went to an excess that disordered his understanding."<sup>157</sup>

There is one scrap of evidence which, at first sight, seems

152. Seir Mutaquerin, Vol. I, p. 352.

153. p. 288.

154. Quoted in Scott's History of Dekkan to (1794), Vol. II, p. 315.

155. Holwell's Interesting Historical Events (1776), Part I, p. 73.

156. Scrafton, Reflections on the Government, etc. of Indostan (1763), p. 36.

157. Orme, History of the Military Transactions of the British Nation in Hindostan (1778), Vol. II, p. 29.

to support the unfavourable view of the character of Sarfaraz Khan. He possessed enormous wealth—the accumulated hoards of his father and grandfather. All of this was seized by Alivardi Khan. But some of the possessions of Sarfaraz Khan had no attraction for Alivardi Khan. The latter prided himself on the fact that he had only one wife and was faithful to her. Accordingly “Haji Ahmad and his sons and relations possessed themselves of Sarfaraz Khan’s fifteen hundred pretty female dependants and slaves.”<sup>158</sup> It would, however, be unjust to discredit the testimony of Eusuff Ali Khan on this evidence. All writers agree that Sarfaraz Khan’s father was a voluptuary. Holwell asserts that Haji Ahmad ransacked the provinces to obtain for his master, regardless of cost, the most beautiful women that could be procured, and never appeared at the Nawab’s evening levee “without something of this kind in his hand.”<sup>159</sup> Obviously among the possessions that Shuja-ud-daula left to his son was a huge seraglio. The author of the *Riyazu-s-salatin*, from whom the above quotation has been made, probably intended to convey this view for he expressly states that the treasures which Alivardi Khan confiscated were the hoards of past Nazims. Otherwise he has been guilty of strange forgetfulness. One of his authorities was an anonymous Persian historian who had written a history of Bengal at the wish of Governor Vansittart. A few pages before he had followed this authority very closely—frequently using the same words—up to the point where he found the story that Sarfaraz Khan had a harem of 1500 women in whose company he spent his time to the total neglect of all affairs. Here he stopped short, rejected the words of his authority, and substituted the statement quoted on a preceding page.<sup>160</sup>

158. *Riyazu-s-salatin*, p. 321.

159. *Interesting Historical Events*, Part I, p. 65.

160. Sarfaraz Khan “consecrated his life to winning the hearts of people, etc.” A manuscript copy of the history of the anonymous Persian historian is in the possession of Khondkar Fazl Rubbee, Khan Bahadur, Diwan to the Nawab Bahadur of Murshidabad. The Khan Bahadur compared this with the Persian Text of the *Riyazu-s-salatin* with the result stated above. It was quite obvious that the author of the *Riyazu-s-salatin* had deliberately rejected the anonymous writer’s statement. Vansittart became Governor in August, 1760.

As there is no possibility of reconciling the irreconcilable we have to choose between the two opposite views of the character of Sarfaraz Khan. On one side Eusuff Ali Khan speaks from personal knowledge. The author of the *Seir Mutaqherin* was also in an exceptional position to learn the truth. His mother was a relation of Alivardi Khan and his father held an important post in his service. He himself was intimately acquainted with all the prominent men of the time. If we say that the former is guilty of deliberate falsehood and the latter of suppressing the truth we are led into this position—that two apologists of Alivardi Khan deliberately and falsely weakened their case by praising Alivardi Khan's adversary. On the other side we have Orme who wrote at Madras and obtained his information about Bengal from correspondents. Scafton arrived in Bengal some years after the death of Sarfaraz Khan and spent the early years of his service at Dacca. Holwell states that he was in western Bengal as early as 1733 and wrote the first draft of his history in 1750.<sup>161</sup> His testimony would have great weight if it could be relied on but unfortunately we can never be sure when he is telling the truth. The Bengal Consultations contain nothing derogatory to the character of Sarfaraz Khan and contain the positive fact that the Company's servants made great efforts to secure his friendship.

This leads us to the story in connection with which it was necessary to discuss the character of Sarfaraz Khan. It was said that Fateh Chand became a bitter enemy of Sarfaraz Khan on account of a wanton outrage committed by the latter on the honour of his family. The story will be found in the pages of Orme and Scafton. Jonathan Scott, a captain in the East India Company's service and Persian secretary to Warren Hastings, who appended a history of Bengal from the accession of Alivardi Khan to the year 1780 to his translation of *Ferishta*, states in a footnote that he had heard the story but was unable to say whether it was true as he had also heard it contradicted by many persons.<sup>162</sup> Holwell has told the story with a wealth of detail, the offspring of his own imagination, which we do not find in other writers. This is his story:—<sup>163</sup>

161. *Interesting Historical Events*, Part I, pp. 13, 14 (note), 57.

162. *Scott's History of Dekkan*, etc. Vol. II, p. 316.

163. *Interesting Historical Events*, Part I, pp. 75-77.

"A few months after Suffraaz Khan came to the government, he threw a disgrace on Futtuah Chand's house which laid the foundation of his precipitate fall. The fact, though well-known to a few, was only whispered, out of respect to the power and credit of that family, which had maintained, even from the reign of Aurung Zebe, a character of distinguished consideration. . . . .

"He had about this time married his youngest grandson,<sup>164</sup> named Seet Mortab Roy, to a young creature of exquisite beauty ; aged about eleven years. The fame of her beauty coming to the ears of the Soubah, he burned with curiosity and lust for the possession of her ; and sending for Jaggaut Seet, demanded a sight of her ;—The old man (then complete fourscore)<sup>165</sup> begged and intreated that the Soubah would not stain the honour and credit of his house ; nor load his last days with shame ; by persisting in a demand which he knew the principles of his caste, forbid a compliance with.

"Neither the tears nor remonstrances of the old man had any weight on the Soubah ; who growing outrageous at the refusal, ordered, in his presence, his house to be immediately surrounded with a body of horse ; and swore on the Khoran, that if he complied in sending his grand-daughter, that he might only see her, he would instantly return her without any injury.

"The Seet reduced to this extremity, and judging from the Soubah's known impetuosity, that his persisting longer in a denial would only make his disgrace more public, at last consented ; and the young creature was carried with the greatest secrecy in the night to visit him. She was returned the same night ; and we will suppose (for the honour of that house) uninjured. Be this as it may, the violence was of too delicate a nature, to permit any future commerce between her and her husband.

"The indignity was never forgiven by Jaggaut Seet ; and

164. Fateh Chand had two grandsons. Mahtab Rai was the elder of the two.

165. A touch of Holwell's imagination. The family records state that Fateh Chand was a boy when he was adopted by Manik Chand in 1700. According to Holwell's statement he was a man of over 40 when adopted.

that whole powerful family, consequently, became inveterate, tho' concealed enemies to the Soubah."

The objections to the story are these. It is not mentioned by the Indian historians, indeed the Seir Mutaquerin states that, for a time, Sarfaraz Khan molested neither Fateh Chand nor even Haji Ahmad. It is repudiated by the Seth family. It is not necessary as an explanation of the fact that Jagat Seth Fateh Chand was hostile to Sarfaraz Khan. It was contradicted by many persons as early as the time of Warren Hastings. Lastly, if a case has been established for accepting the character of Sarfaraz Khan as presented by Indian historians, the story must be rejected altogether. In spite of the elaborate narration of Holwell, future writers on this period of the history of Bengal will do well to follow Scott's example and relegate the story to a footnote. It would be still better to reject it altogether.

By this time the reader must be feeling irritated at the disparaging remarks that have been made in the course of this chapter against Mr. Holwell and his irritation will pass into strong condemnation unless some justification for them is given. The writer, too, has a duty to perform which he has deferred to the present moment. He has to defend Jagat Seth Fateh Chand against the charge of forgoing a farman—a charge which Holwell alone, unsupported by evidence, has brought against him. The defence will be, and it is the only possible defence under the circumstances, that as a historian Holwell is absolutely untrustworthy and as a man his word would not be taken in any court of law unless corroborated by the strongest evidence.

## 8.

John Zephaniah Holwell has received the eulogy of modern writers for his gallant defence of Calcutta in 1756 after the desertion of Governor Drake and his chief officers. He was the principal survivor of the Black Hole tragedy and wrote a narrative of his sufferings. When Clive left India in February 1760 Holwell succeeded him as Governor of Calcutta but in August was superseded by Vansittart. His great achievement as Governor was to work up a case, in a most unscrupu-

lous manner, against Nawab Mir Jafar. He gained Governor Vansittart over to his views and in October 1760 Mir Jafar was deposed to the great indignation of seven gentlemen of the Council, who strongly protested against the measure and asserted that if the President had consulted the whole Council the measure would have been rejected by a majority.<sup>166</sup> He was a man of great ability which he used unscrupulously to secure his own ends. Clive condemns him in the strongest terms. "Mr. Holwell is a specious and sensible man," he wrote, "but from what I have heard and observed myself I cannot be persuaded he will ever make use of his abilities for the good of the Company."<sup>167</sup> He trembled to think of the fatal consequences if he were succeeded by such a mercenary man. "Mr. — has talents, but I fear wants a heart, therefore unfit to preside where integrity as well as capacity are equally essential."<sup>168</sup> It seems ungenerous to add that when Siraj-ud-daula besieged Calcutta Holwell would have run away with the others if he had been able. But the statement was made at the time. Ives mentions it without disapproval<sup>169</sup> and Clive believed it. "I am well informed," he said, "there is no merit due to him for staying behind in the fort, nothing but the want of a boat prevented his escape and flight with the rest."<sup>170</sup>

To qualify himself to write on the history of India Holwell "studiously perused all that has been written of the empire of Indostan, both as to its ancient as well as more modern state; as also the various accounts transmitted to us, by authors in almost all ages (from Arrian, down to the Abbe de Guyon) concerning the Hindoos, and the religious tenets of the Brahmins." He proceeds "to pronounce them all very defective, fallacious, and unsatisfactory to an inquisitive searcher after

166. Holwell, *India Tracts* (1774), p. 107.

167. Clive to William Mabbot 31st January, 1757, (*Hill's Bengal in 1756-57*, Vol. II, p. 186).

168. *Malcolm's Life of Clive* (1836), Vol. II, p. 137 and 139. Asterisks are placed for the name but it is quite clear that Holwell is the man.

169. *A Voyage from England to India in the year 1754 to (1773)*, p. 93. Ives was Surgeon to Admiral Watson.

170. In letter quoted above.

truth.”<sup>171</sup> Holwell may have been right, for all his reading did not save him from making the elementary blunder of declaring that Prince Nicosir, a pretender to the Empire in 1719, was the son of the great Akbar who died in 1605.<sup>172</sup> If Holwell is correct in his history of the Mughal Empire from the death of Aurangzeb to Muhammad Shah then Elphinstone’s History of India needs revision for that period. If the Seir Mutaqherin approximate to history then Holwell’s account of the Transactions in Bengal from 1717 to 1750 is romance. To relate all the instances in which they differ and to say that the former is right and the latter wrong would serve no good purpose. But if Holwell deals with the affairs of the Company during that period and is wrong in his facts, if further, he shows an ignorance of the greatest event in the history of the Company in Bengal between the founding of Calcutta and its capture by Siraj-ud-daula which would have disgraced the youngest writer in the Company’s service then we can at once dismiss his claims to be an authority on the history of the country government.

The only reference of importance made by Holwell in his history to the affairs of the Company is this. Shuja-ud-daula “made sundry regulations respecting the trade of the provinces, both inland and foreign; casting his eyes particularly on the Europeans; and attentive that they should not clandestinely partake of greater immunities and advantages, than the terms of their Phirmaunds or grants, gave them a title to. To this end, he encreased the number of Chowkees (or places for the receipts of customs) to twenty, upon the several rivers; whereas, before his government, there were only two; Buxsh Bunder, and Azimgunge.”<sup>173</sup> Two Indian historians of Bengal have copied this statement into their books.

In reality one of the great grievances of the English against Murshid Kuli Khan was the extortions they were subjected to by these chaukis. In 1708 Governor Pitt of Madras complained to a high officer of the Emperor Bahadur Shah of the abuses and obstructions to the Company’s trade in Bengal,

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171. Interesting Historical Events, Part I, p. 5.

172. Interesting Historical Events, Part I, p. 37. He was the son of Prince Akbar.

173. Interesting Historical Events, Part I, p. 56.

particularly in bringing goods from Patna, Dacca, Rajmahal, Malda and Cassimbazar "every little Governour having erected all along Ye rivers Chowkeys who Exort (sic) Custom and what they please, and will pay no reverence to ye Royall Authority, In so much that our Goods on ye boates are often coming down 6 or 8 Months, so that we Either loose ye Monsoon to send them on our ships Or they are damaged and Rotten before they arrive."<sup>174</sup> In 1717 the Company had to keep in constant pay 220 men besides officers to provide convoys for their goods because "Jaffer Caun Sooba of Bengal encourages the interrupting our Affaires and Stopping Our Goods by under Officers and Choukeydars."<sup>175</sup> Two brisk engagements had previously occurred in 1713, once at the "Chowkey of Terragonny," in which the convoy burnt the chauki down,<sup>176</sup> and the other at "Conna Chowkey" where the convoy killed between twenty and thirty of the chauki people with the loss of one officer killed, one soldier wounded.<sup>177</sup> No one would guess from Holwell's remarks that, as far as the English were concerned, these chaukis were not entitled to interfere with the English for under the Emperor's farman and the perwannas of successive vice-roys they were entitled to trade custom free in Bengal, Behar and Orissa upon paying Rs. 3,000 per annum at Hugli and the rent for their settlement at Calcutta.

But there is worse to come. "The embassy conducted by John Surman to the court of the emperor Farrukhsiyar was the most important step taken by the English in Bengal from the foundation of Calcutta by Charnock to the conquest of Bengal by Clive."<sup>178</sup> If Holwell shows, as he does, gross ignorance with regard to such an event as this, his character as a historian is gone. He writes "When Mr. Surman (head of the embassy sent by the Company to the emperor Farrucseer, to solicit the last

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174. Wilson's Early Annals of the English in Bengal, Vol. II, Part II, p. 263.

175. Wilson's Early Annals of the English in Bengal, Vol. II, Part I, p. 281.

176. Wilson's Early Annals of the English in Bengal, Vol. II, Part I, p. 97.

177. Wilson's Early Annals of the English in Bengal, Vol. II, Part I, p. 141.

178. Wilson's Early Annals of the English in Bengal, Vol. II, Part II, Introduction, p. i.



phirmaund, and explanation of former grants) was on his return to Fort William, he pitched his tents in the neighbourhood of Moorshadabad, and having acquired from the Emperor a title and rank in the list of Omrahs, something superior to that which Jaffier Khan (then Suba of Bengal) bore, Mr. Surman expected the first visit. Jaffir Khan allowed Mr. Surman's superior title, but considering himself in rank the third Suba of the empire, and Viceroy of Bengal confirmed from court, thought the dignity of his post demanded the first visit from Mr. Surman: frequent messages passed between them, touching this ceremonial, for the space of three days; but neither stooping, Mr. Surman struck his tents, and returned to Calcutta. Thus an injudicious punctilio in Mr. Surman destroyed all future cordiality with a man, on whom (from the nature and power of his post) so much depended, for the due execution of those phirmaunds granted by Farrucseer.<sup>179</sup>

The whole story is pure fiction. There is not the slightest reference to a single detail of it in Surman's Diary and other papers, edited by the late Dr. C. R. Wilson and published by the Government of Bengal in 1911. What makes the whole thing still more extraordinary is the fact that Surman did not pass by Murshidabad. When he arrived at the headwaters of the Bhagirathi which flows past Murshidabad he did not proceed down that river but made a detour and went down the Jalangi river, joining the Bhagirathi at Kistnagar and thus avoiding Murshidabad altogether. There is no possibility of doubt about the matter. In November 3rd, 1717, Surman arrived at Rajmahal and left on the 5th. On the 6th he was opposite Aurungabad, on the 7th at Murcha, on the 8th at Jalangi, on the 9th at Mirgi and on the 10th at Kistnagar.<sup>180</sup>

But Holwell was not merely an inaccurate historian.. He was quite capable of inventing the charge he brought against Jagat Seth Fateh Chand and in the absence of other evidence we have every right to assume that he did so. The chief of the factory at Dacca, the chief and second of the factory at Cassimbazar, accused Holwell of fabricating a speech and ascribing it to Alivardi Khan. All the evidence we possess is in

179. Holwell, *India Tracts*, p. 421.

180. Wilson's *Early Annals of the English in Bengal*, Vol. II, Part 2, pp. 247, 248.

their favour and Holwell's defence is so lame that it practically convicts him.<sup>181</sup> In 1766 Clive and his Council considered it their duty to acquaint the Court of Directors that the "horrible massacres with which Holwell had charged Nawab Mir Jafar were "cruel aspersions on the character of that Prince" and had not the least foundation in truth. The persons who, according to Holwell, had been put to death by Mir Jafar "are all now living, except two, who were put to death by Meeran, without the Nawab's consent or knowledge."<sup>182</sup>

These two facts have attracted the notice of other writers. But what seems almost incredible is the astounding fact that no one appears to have noticed that in the very same volume in which Holwell charges Jagat Seth Fateh Chand with fraud he himself stands convicted of precisely the same fraud. From his own writing this bad man stands revealed as one of the world's great imposters. He asserts that the leisure hours of his thirty years' residence in India were spent in collecting materials relative to the history and religion of the inhabitants of the country. Many curious Hindu manuscripts came into his possession and among them "two very correct and valuable copies of the Gentoo Shastah."<sup>183</sup> procured with great labour and at great expense he spent eighteen months in translating the Sastra.<sup>184</sup> In one year more he would have completed the work but the catastrophe of 1756 intervened and when Calcutta was captured he lost manuscript and translation. By an unforeseen and extraordinary event "that possibly I may hereafter relate" (he never does) he recovered some of his manuscripts.<sup>185</sup> Hence he was able to give to the world an account of what he calls the "Chartah Bhade of Bramah," the oldest and purest of the sacred writings of the Hindus. In Holwell's time only three or four families were capable of reading and expounding it from the Sanskrit character.<sup>186</sup> He obtained his

181. Hill's Bengal in 1756-57, Vol. II, pp. 15, 16, 162, 163, Vol. III, pp. 355, 356, 357.

182. Long's Selections from Unpublished Records of Government, p. 428.

183. Interesting Historical Events, Part I, p. 3.

184. Ibid.

185. Ibid. p. 4.

186. Interesting Historical Events, Part II, p. 15.

information concerning it not from ordinary learned Brahmins who, in spite of their knowledge of the truth, pandered to the corrupt beliefs of the mob, but from those "whose purity of principle and manners, and zeal for the primitive doctrines of Bramah's Shastah, sets them above disguising the truth."<sup>187</sup> Holwell gives an account of the doctrines contained in the "Chartah Bhade of Bramah"<sup>188</sup> and a translation of the first book and a section of the second. This version of the most anicent sacred book of the Hindus will make Sanskrit scholars gasp and stare. But what condemns the whole thing as a colossal fraud is the fact that Holwell has retained some words of the original in his translation which he explains in footnotes and from these words it appears that his manuscript of the "Chartah Bhade" which only a few Brahmin families was capable of reading and expounding from the Sanskrit character, was written in a mixture of colloquial Bengali and Hindustani<sup>189</sup>—the latter predominating. The fourth "sublime book" of the "Chartah Bhade" which "must lie in oblivion, until some one, blessed with opportunity, leisure, application, and genius, brings them to light" was, according to Holwell, called by Hindus "Bramah Ka Insoff (insaf) Bhade" or "Bramah's Book of Justice."<sup>190</sup>

An English reader may, perhaps appreciate the point better by an illustration. Let him imagine what his feelings would

187. Interesting Historical Events, Part II, p. 9 and p. 21.

188. Interesting Historical Events, Part II, pp. 9-21.

189. He starts his translation with the words "God is one" which according to a footnote are a translation of "ekhummesha" (ek + hamesha?) pure Hindustani (Int. Hist. Events, Part II, p. 31). The other words of the Sanskrit? original given in the translation or in footnotes are:—debtah (angels) logue (a people, multitude or congregation) debth-logue (the angelic host) p. 35, hazaar par hazaar, (thousands upon thousands), p. 42. Maha Surge (supreme heaven) onderah (intense darkness), p. 44; dooneah or dunneah (the world), dunnea-houdah (the worlds or the universe), boboons (regions or planets), p. 48, ghoji (the cow) ghoijal (cows), goijal barry (a cow-house), mhurd (the common name of man, from murto, matter or earth), Jhoale (water, fluid), outmaan (the air), p. 51. Jogues (ages), p. 56, pereet logue (purified people), p. 103, munnoo logue (people of contemplation from mun or mon, thought, reflection), p. 104, modos (discord), kytoo (confusion, tumult), p. 106, surjee (the sun), chunder (the moon), p. 110.

190. Interesting Historical Events. Part II, p. 101.

be if a publisher placed before him a translation of what purported to be a hitherto unknown poem of Homer and he found that all the words of the original retained in the text or explained by the translator in footnotes were words of modern colloquial Greek mixed with a greater number of Turkish words. Such was the barefaced fraud perpetrated by Holwell. It was for this that Voltaire gave him grateful thanks.<sup>191</sup> This is the man that charged Jagat Seth Fateh Chand with fabricating a farman.

Holwell is popularly known as the historian of the Black Hole tragedy. Even here it is necessary constantly to bear in mind Clive's caution against him and his companions "I would have you guard against everything these gentlemen can say," he said, "for, believe me, they are bad subjects and rotten at heart."<sup>192</sup> In the first version that Holwell gave of which there is any record he declared that the guards of Siraj-ud-daula fired into the prison during the whole night.<sup>193</sup> This statement was soon discarded and he declared that the guards "ceased not insulting us the whole night."<sup>194</sup> In his final elaborate version we are told that the prisoners insulted the guards "to provoke them to fire in upon us."<sup>195</sup> The details of what happened in that prison house in the course of the night of the 20th June, 1756, will probably never be known. But it is time that Holwell's narrative should be recognised for what it really is—an ingenious and impudent puff of John Zephaniah Holwell.

In 1876 Sir William Hunter included in his "Statistical Account of Bengal" a short history of the Seths of Murshidabad founded on materials supplied by the head of the family. Among these materials was an explanation of Fateh Chand's alliance with Alivardi Khan. "Murshid Kuli Khan had, in the course of business, deposited with Manik Chand a sum of seven krors of rupees which had never been repaid. When Sarfaraz Khan, on his accession, pressed for payment, Fathi

191. Quoted by Busteed in *Echoes from Old Calcutta*.

192. Clive to Pigot, *Malcolm's Life of Clive*, Vol. I, p. 159.

193. Letter from Sykes 8th July, 1756. *Hill's Bengal in 1756-57*, Vol. I, p. 62.

194. Letter from Holwell to Council, Fort St. George, 3rd August, 1756. *Hill's Bengal*, Vol. I, p. 186.

195. Holwell's Narrative.

Chand begged for a reasonable interval for its liquidation, and, in the meanwhile, leagued himself with Alivardi Khan, who was already preparing for revolt in Behar."<sup>196</sup> No historian mentions an incident of this kind and it seems incredible that Sarfaraz Khan should have allowed such a huge sum of money to remain unchallenged in Fateh Chand's possession all these years. It may be a variant of a story, though altered almost beyond recognition, which is given in the *Riyazu-s-salatin*.<sup>197</sup> When Sarfaraz Khan obtained information from his emissaries that his three ministers were plotting against him in alliance with Alivardi Khan he determined to dismiss them from their offices. They, however, reminded him of their years of meritorious service, they declared that there were large outstandings of revenue to be collected, they hinted that they would incur heavy losses if they were dismissed at once and requested Sarfaraz Khan to postpone their dismissal until they had submitted the annual balance sheet which was due in about three months' time. Sarfaraz Khan allowed himself to be duped and the balance sheet, if presented at all, was presented to Alivardi Khan. It is hard to believe that Sarfaraz Khan was as simple as this.

If we discard these stories, the offspring of gossip and rumour, a plain tale remains. During his father's lifetime Sarfaraz Khan had his own household, with his own officers, civil and military.<sup>198</sup> To some of these men Sarfaraz Khan had become greatly attached. When their master became Nawab they had great expectations of power and wealth but their hopes were disappointed when Sarfaraz Khan, in obedience to his father's last wishes, confirmed Haji Ahmad, the Rai Raian Alam Chand and Jagat Seth Fateh Chand in office. This was not all. To the pangs of disappointed ambition was added the bitterness of balked revenge. They had grievances of long standing against Haji Ahmad and when Shuja-ud-daula died it seemed to them that the time had come to pay off old scores. They clamoured against the appointment of the three ministers and gave Sarfaraz Khan no peace until he had dismissed Haji Ahmad and his two friends from office.

196. Statistical Account of Bengal, Vol. ix, p. 255.

197. *Riyazu-s-salatin*, p. 308.

198. *Riyazu-s-salatin*, p. 308.

Sarfaraz Khan had made some powerful enemies. Haji Ahmad's sons and relations were governors of districts and his brother Alivardi Khan was Governor of Behar. Sarfaraz Khan's friends saw the danger of leaving so much power in the hands of the family of the dismissed minister. They advised Sarfaraz Khan to seize and imprison Haji Ahmad's sons. But Haji Ahmad had managed to convince the Nawab that he harboured no ill-will on account of his dismissal and was still attached to his interests. He declared that he was weary of the cares of office and had, indeed, reason to be thankful to the Nawab who had relieved him of the burden and given him the opportunity of spending his old age in religious retirement.<sup>199</sup> Sarfaraz Khan was completely deceived and is said to have reduced his army at Haji Ahmad's instigation. As a sign of his sincerity he disclosed to Haji Ahmad the proposal that had been made to seize the latter's sons. The only result was to hurry on the preparations which Haji Ahmad and Alivardi Khan were making to dethrone Sarfaraz Khan for Haji Ahmad apprehended that the Nawab might at any time be persuaded to follow the advice of those who were his real friends. A proposal of Sarfaraz Khan's to marry his son to a relation of Haji Ahmad was construed as an insult to the family on the ground that the lady was already betrothed to Mirza Mahmud, better known afterwards as Siraj-ud-daula, and when Sarfaraz Khan interfered in the affairs of Behar Alivardi Khan decided on action.

Alivardi Khan acted vigorously and with the ability which characterised all his measures. He wrote to court for a farman conferring on him the government of the three provinces with injunctions to recover Bengal and Orissa from the hands of Sarfaraz Khan. He complained that Sarfaraz Khan had coined money in the name of Nadir Shah, the Persian king who had plundered Delhi a few months before, and had had the Khutbah recited after his name. What appealed with greater force to the corrupt nobles at Delhi was promise of a krur of rupees besides the annual tribute and the wealth of Sarfaraz Khan. He mustered his troops on the pretence that he intended to march against a refractory zemindar. When he received favourable news from Delhi he placed guards on all the roads leading

199. Scott's History of Dekkan, etc., Vol. II, p. 316.

to Murshidabad so that no news of his movements might reach the capital and after exacting an oath of fidelity from his officers he began his march. Previously he had written a<sup>\*</sup> letter to Jagat Seth Fateh Chand—his friend as the Seir Mutaqherin calls him on two occasions—informing him of the date on which he was setting out for Murshidabad. The letter was despatched by a trusty man who had orders to deliver it on a certain day which was pointed out to him. This was the day on which Alivardi Khan reckoned on capturing the town which guarded the entrance into Bengal. All fell out as he wished. The letter was presented on the day the fortress was captured. Jagat Seth read the letter and from its date was able to calculate that Alivardi Khan had entered Bengal and in four or five days would reach Murshidabad. “With an air seemingly alarmed, he immediately mounted, and with much consternation in his features, ‘he presented to Sarfaraz Khan the letter which he had just received from Alivardy Qhan, whom he suspected, said he, to be now at Radjeemahal ; at the same time he produced another letter from Aaly-verdy Qhan to that Prince himself. The purport was this : “since, after the many affronts received by my brother Hadji-Ahmed, attempts have been made upon the honour and chastity of our family, your servant in order to save that family from farther disgrace, has been obliged to come so far, but with no other sentiments than those of fidelity and submission. Your servant hopes therefore that Hadji-Ahmed shall receive leave to come to me with his family and dependants.”’<sup>200</sup>

The blow fell upon Sarfaraz Khan without warning. He saw that he had been deceived and bitterly reproached all whom he suspected to be Alivardi’s friends. But words were of small avail. It was a time for action. He summoned an assembly of all his ministers and officers. The first question to be decided was whether Haji Ahmad should be dismissed to his brother or not. Haji Ahmad promised that if he were allowed to go to his brother he would persuade him to return to his government. Some believed him, some did not. The question was settled by Ghaus Khan, one of the most devoted of Sarfaraz Khan’s officers. He argued that it was useless to

200. Seir Mutaquerin, Vol. I, p. 359.

imprison an old man. That would not drive Alivardi Khan back to Behar. If Haji Ahmad fulfilled his promise all would be well, if not, it mattered little. If they were ready and willing to encounter Alivardi Khan in battle, they need not fear the addition of a single man who would neither add to, nor detract from, the strength of the enemy. So Haji Ahmad was allowed to go. He fulfilled his promise by persuading his brother to return some hundred yards in the direction of Behar and then left him to resume his march.<sup>201</sup>

Meanwhile Sarfaraz Khan and his council had decided to advance against the invader. In three or four days' time the army arrived at Khamarh where a halt was called to receive the report of messengers who had been sent to ascertain Alivardi Khan's real intentions. They reported that Alivardi Khan would submit if Sarfaraz Khan dismissed from his council the enemies of his family and that in token of his sincerity he had sent a Koran upon which he had sworn the most sacred oaths. Alivardi Khan's enemies afterwards declared that this Koran was only a brick enclosed in a casket.

Sarfaraz Khan would not part with his friends. He marched on and faced the army of Alivardi Khan at Gheriah on the banks of the Bhagirathi. Messengers went to and fro between the two armies carrying, on behalf of Alivardi Khan, proposals similar to those made at Khamrah and with a similar result. The aid of treachery was invoked by both sides. The Seir Mutaqherin states that Jagat Seth sent letters to all of Alivardi Khan's officers promising them bribes according to their rank, if they would seize Alivardi Khan and deliver him up to Sarfaraz Khan. On this the translator, who lived for some time at Murshidabad, remarks that Alivardi Khan certainly attempted to corrupt the officers of Sarfaraz Khan through Jagat Seth, that one of Sarfaraz Khan's officers, who was alive when he was engaged on his translation, assured him he himself had received Rs. 4,000 to load the artillery only with earth and rubbish and that the universal report in Murshidabad was that some of the guns were served in that manner.<sup>202</sup> It seems clear that the

201. Seir Mutaquerin, Vol. I, pp. 359, 360.

202. "The Nabob has confined the Tope Conna Droga (top khana, darogha, the officer in charge of the artillery) having discovered that



indiscriminate attempt of Jagat Seth to bribe Alivardi Khan's officers was meant to fail and at the same time to furnish Alivardi Khan with a good excuse for bringing matters to a crisis. Mustapha Khan, an officer entirely devoted to Alivardi Khan, brought to him one of Jagat Seth's letters and urged him to fight at once. Alivardi Khan was, or pretended to be, impressed with his danger and gave orders for battle on the following day. Before dawn his soldiers were moving. His guns startled Sarfaraz Khan from his devotions who mounted his elephant, marched against the enemy at the head of his troops and fell in the battle.

One battle gave Bengal to Alivardi Khan though a short campaign was necessary to reduce Orissa. A day or two after the battle of Gheriah Alivardi Khan marched to Murshidabad, proceeded to the hall of audience and seated himself on the masnad.<sup>203</sup> The officers of government and of the army together with the principal citizens of Murshidabad hastened to acknowledge his authority though the latter were filled with horror at the black ingratitude he had shown towards the son of his benefactor and looked upon him with detestation. Before many years had passed Alivardi Khan was able to remove these feelings from the minds of his contemporaries but he has not been so successful with later generations. Modern historians, especially Indian historians, are disposed to dilate on the disloyalty, treachery and ingratitude of these men and Jagat Seth Fateh Chand's association with the conspiracy is held up to obloquy. But the condemnation has been too sweeping. Circumstances have been ignored which deserve consideration if we are to mete out just blame to these men in general and Fateh Chand in particular, or if we are to understand why revolutions in Bengal in the 18th century were so frequent and so comparatively bloodless.

#### 10.

Sarfaraz Khan had no claim to be Nawab by hereditary right. Up to the death of Aurungzeb the emperor had sent

he had wet all the powder and filled the cannon with Bricks and Stones." Bengal Consultations, 21st April, 1740.

\* 203. The large cushion, etc. used by native Princes in India in place of a throne (Hobson Jobson, p. 600).

viceroys to Bengal and removed them at his pleasure. When the viceroy died the emperor could, if he wished, seize all his wealth, and it was to provide for such an eventuality as this that Murshid Kuli Khan had bought a large estate near Murshidabad which he settled upon Sarfaraz Khan with all legal forms.<sup>204</sup> Succeeding emperors had generally left the governor in possession undisturbed especially if the tribute was received regularly, for they knew that any change would have to be effected by force and all their resources were required nearer home. Loyalty, as we understand it, did not exist either towards the Emperor or the Nawab.<sup>205</sup> The officials of the court and the officers of the army substituted for this an attachment to their pay and the Nawab relied on binding them to himself by the claims of gratitude for benefits received rather than by the dictates of any abstract feeling of loyalty. The spirit which animated these men differed completely from the loyalty of their contemporaries in Europe. In the same year in which Sarfaraz Khan was slain a European Empress, in the darkest hour of her fortune, appealed thus to the loyalty of her Hungarian subjects:—"Deserted by all, we rely wholly and solely upon the loyalty of the Hungarians and the valour for which they are famed of old. We entreat the estates, in this extremity of peril, to care zealously for our person, our children, the crown, and the empire." The Hungarians had small cause for being grateful to the House of Hapsburg but their reply was instantaneous and unanimous, "*Vitam nostram et sanguinem consecramus*" was shouted from many hundreds of throats and all Europe was impressed and thrilled. In the same year, too, there were many men of British blood, some at home, some in exile who, in spite of all the injuries their countrymen had suffered at the hands of the last king of the House of Stewart and in spite of years of defeat and disappointment, still persisted in their loyalty to him whom they

204. Stewart, History of Bengal.

205. "Loyalty and patriotism, those virtuous incentives to great and noble actions, are here unknown and when they cease to fear they cease to obey . . . . Money is here (if I may so express myself) the essence of power for the soldiers know no other attachment than their pay and the richest party soon becomes the strongest." Scrafton's Reflections, p. 30.

regarded as their rightful king. Their chivalrous devotion has been finely expressed by Macaulay in his "Jacobite's Epitaph." :—

For my true king I offered free from stain  
 Courage and faith ; vain faith, and courage vain.  
 For him I threw lands, honours, wealth, away,  
 And one dear hope, that was more prized than they.  
 For him I languished in a foreign clime,  
 Grey-haired with sorrow in my manhood's prime ;  
 Heard on Lavernia Scargill's whispering trees,  
 And pined by Arno for my lovelier Tees ;  
 Beheld each night my home in fevered sleep,  
 Each morning started from the dream to weep ;  
 Till God, who saw me tried too sorely, gave  
 The resting place I asked, an early grave.

Compare the spirit which prompted the actions of these men with that which prompted the men of Bengal at their best. Seven years afterwards Alivardi Khan was menaced with ruin. He had to fight the Mahrattas and at the same time crush a revolt of a large number of his Afghan troops. They had slain his favourite son-in-law and his brother, Haji Ahmad, at Patna. His grand-children were prisoners and treated with contumely. He called a general assembly of his friends as well as of his military officers, high and low. In moving words he appealed to them for support in the crisis. His audience was touched and one of his officers spoke for all the rest in these words :—"There is no doubt that every one of us, your servants, have been benefited by their attachment to your highness : we have every one of us experienced your favours, and received a variety of obligations from you and your family ; and now we have no other intention than that of repaying you by shedding our blood in your cause. March then and we follow." Alivardi immediately produced a Koran and made them all swear to be true to their words.<sup>206</sup>

Siraj-ud-daula invoked the same sentiment when he appealed for help to Mir Jafar just before the battle of Plassey, "I now repent of what I have done and availing myself of

those ties of consanguinity which subsist between us, as well as of those rights which my grandfather, Aaly-verdy-qhan, has doubtless acquired upon your gratitude, I look up to you, as to the only representative of that venerable personage: and hope therefore, that, forgetting my past trespasses, you shall henceforward behave as becomes a Seyd,<sup>207</sup> a man united in blood to me, and a man of sentiments, who conserves a grateful remembrance of all the benefits he has received from my family: I recommend myself to you: take care of the conservation of my honour and life."<sup>208</sup>

In the minds of the court officials and military officers loyalty, then, was synonymous with gratitude. The zamindars, the landed gentry of the country, were men "restless and refractory by nature and by trade."<sup>209</sup> The people regarded revolutions with absolute indifference. They were according to the historian, "tame cowardly wretches, at all times so crouching and so ready to submit to any one that offers."<sup>210</sup> They clung to the houses they had built and the fields they tilled. They would suffer much before they would abandon these and therefore, declared Warren Hastings they were made to suffer much.<sup>211</sup> Nor were there any ties of nationality by which the people of Bengal might have united in one common cause. Warren Hastings found that the Maharattas were the only people of Hindostan and the Deccan who possessed such a bond of unity.<sup>212</sup>

It is true that Fateh Chand and his fellow conspirators acted treacherously and treachery is hateful. But when we condemn them we must remember that we are judging them by the standards of other times and by a code of honour which was not theirs. "Of thorns men do not gather figs, nor of a bramble bush gather they grapes." Treachery, if profitable, called forth admiration and received rewards. In 1743 Ali-

207. Arabic Saiyad. The designation in India of those who claim to be descendants of Muhammad, (Hobson Jobson, p. 886).

208. Seir Mutaquerin, Vol. I, p. 767.

209. Seir Mutaquerin.

210. Seir Mutaquerin, Vol. II, p. 7.

211. Minute by the Governor General, 12th November, 1776, quoted in Hunter's Bengal M.S. Records, p. 57.

212. Warren Hastings, Memoirs relative to the State of India, (1786), p. 89.

vardi Khan, by an act of the most unscrupulous treachery, massacred the general and chief officers of the Mahrattas who had been induced to come to his tent by the most solemn promises of safe conduct confirmed by the most sacred oaths. By this act he received "such an addition to his character, as raised him both in the minds of his troops and of his subjects, who admired their being so suddenly delivered from these merciless ravagers: nor were the troops less pleased with their unexpected success." This was not all. He sent an account of the exploit to the Emperor and requested him to bestow honours "on every one of those who had exerted themselves so strenuously in the engagement of the tent." The Emperor did so. To Alivardi Khan in particular he sent many gifts and bestowed on him the title of "the Valiant of the Kingdom."<sup>213</sup> It was not for their contemporaries to throw stones at Jagat Seth and his friends on the score of treachery nor did they attempt to do so.

What filled their contemporaries with horror was the base ingratitude shown by Alivardi Khan, Haji Ahmad and the Rai Raian Alam Chand. They owed everything to Shuja-ud-daula and they deposed and slew his son. But this was not the case with Fateh Chand. It was not Shuja-ud-daula who could say that he owed to Fateh Chand this easy possession of the government of Bengal. It is true, however, that Murshid Kuli Khan had been the great patron of the family and his grandson had claims on Fateh Chand. On the other hand it is necessary to appreciate Fateh Chand's position. By the unanimous opinion of historians Sarfaraz Khan was an incompetent ruler. It was probably due to this fact that Fateh Chand had not supported Murshid Kuli Khan when he wished his grandson to succeed him. The state of affairs was far more serious at the time of Shuj-ud-daula's death. Delhi had been captured by Nadir Shah and the Empire was tottering to its fall. The Mahrattas were approaching. Perilous times were at hand and Sarfaraz Khan had dismissed and alienated his most capable ministers. Had Fateh Chand supported Sarfaraz Khan he would have promoted his own ruin and the ruin of the country.

All that can be said for Alivardi Khan has been said by the author of the *Seir Mutaqherin*. "Upon the whole, altho' the slaying his Lord and benefactor was unquestionably one of the blackest actions that could be committed and one of the most abominable events that could happen ; yet it cannot be denied that Serefraz Qhan had no talents for government, and no capacity for business ; and that, had his government lasted but some time more, such a train of evils, and such a series of endless confusions would have been the consequence of his incapacity, that disorders without number, and disturbances without end, would have arisen insensibly, and would have brought ruin and desolation on these countries and their inhabitants. The Marhattas had already cast their eyes upon these rich provinces : shortly after they attacked and invaded them on all sides ; and lucky did it prove for the inhabitants of these countries that those merciless free-booters had to deal with such a man as Aali-verdy-qhan, who by his talents for both war and government ; and by the exertions of a keen sabre became indefatigable, as well as by the resources of his policy, found means to repress those ravagers, and at last to expel them entirely out of Bengal. . . . Such exertions were not of a nature to be expected from Serefraz Qhan and his ministers nor were they men to oppose such a torrent with any effect : whereas his rival, to such a modesty of behaviour, and to so much purity of morals, joined political and military talents, and all the renown and power which victory and success could confer : the whole forming a character, which far from being equalled by any of his contemporaries or any of his successors, would hardly find a comparison in the records of past time."<sup>214</sup>

## 11

On the 23rd April, 1740, not more than three weeks after Alivardi Khan had set out from Patna, it seemed to the English at Cassimbazar that Bengal had once more a settled government for Alivardi Khan was declared Nawab of the province and was "very severe in his justice."<sup>215</sup> He had, however, yet to be

214. *Seir Mutaqherin*, Vol. I, p. 368.

215. *Bengal Consultations*, 28th April, 1740

confirmed in his appointment by the Emperor and though he asserted that he had been acting on orders received from the Vizier Nizamu-l-mulk people doubted the truth of this.<sup>216</sup> On the 29th May an express messenger, sent by the English wakil at Delhi, brought the news to Patna that Alivardi Khan was confirmed Nawab of Bengal and Behar, on the 10th June the English were informed that the farman had been received at Murshidabad and by the 19th October their wakil at Cassimbazar gave them a copy of it. Shortly afterwards the Emperor conferred a new title on the Nawab together with the Mahi, or Order of the Fish.<sup>217</sup>

The Rai Rayan Alam Chand was dead and Haji Ahmad and Jagat Seth Fatch Chand were the two most influential persons at Murshidabad. The latter continued to have important business transactions with the English and continued to be their friend at the Durbar. On the 7th July, 1740, the Company borrowed a second sum of Rs. 121,000 from Jagat Seth but before the end of the month bullion arrived from England and 26 chests of this were delivered to the President partly to pay off their loan of April and partly to make advances to their merchants. On the 11th December the President and Council were informed by the Company's servants at Cassimbazar that Jagat Seth would be willing to reduce the rate of interest on loans from twelve to nine per cent if he received a request from them to do so. The Council met on the same day and agreed 'That the President do write to Futtichand and remonstrate to him the heavy Interest of 12 per cent paid on all sums borrowed for many years past and to request that he will let the Hon'ble Company have what money they may have occasion to borrow at interest of him at their factory at Cassimbazar at nine per cent per annum on notes of hand from the Chief &ca Council there payable on demand.' On the 21st December the English at Cassimbazar borrowed Rs. 60,000 at the new rate and would have taken a large sum but, they wrote, "the Mint having been shut up some time he could not let us have any more not having any new siccas and there would be a loss on taking old ones."

216. Bengal Consultations, 9th May, 1740.

217. Bengal Consultations, 16th June, 1740; 23rd October, 1740; 8th March, 1741-42.

Jagat Seth promised, however, that when the mint was open he would let them what they wished at the same rate and not only them but also the Council at Calcutta and, they believed, the English factories at other places. A month or two before this the English at Cassimbazar had dissuaded the Company from making a new attempt to obtain the freedom of the mint at Murshidabad. Although this privilege had been granted the English by the farman of the Emperor Farrukhsiyar they pointed out that no Nawab had paid obedience to that article of the farman and an attempt to enforce it might cause their other privileges to be called in question. "We also think", they added, "that while Futtichund lives he will always have it in his power to prevent the good effects of any solicitation thereon".<sup>218</sup>

At the end of the year Alivardi Khan left Murshidabad to subdue Orissa which was held by one of Sarfaraz Khan's officers named Murshid Kuli Khan and was absent during the whole of 1741 and part of 1742. In the beginning of 1742 Haji Ahmad, who had been left in charge of the government at Murshidabad, was quarrelling with the English on the ground that they were carrying on an illegal trade in salt. "The English", he said to their wakil, "traded with much greater advantage than even the King's own subjects ; it was therefore shameful in them to peddle in the few things left for the natives ; besides salt was reserved for the Nabob's own profit and we had several times experienced during his (Haji Ahmad's) ministry that a trade therein would not be suffered". The English wakil contended that if any of the Company's servants or soldiers had engaged in the trade in salt they had done so in a clandestine manner but the Company itself had no cognisance of the matter. Haji Ahmad refused to believe him and during the whole interview was in such a passion that the wakil was soon reduced to silence.

When the news of this reached Calcutta the Council met on the 1st February and resolved to send letters through the President to Haji Ahmad and Jagat Seth Fateh Chand which they hoped would have a good effect in accommodating the affair. They hoped much from Fateh Chand. "If he is pleased to

<sup>218</sup>. Bengal Consultations, 7th July, 1740; 26th July, 1740; 11th December, 1740; 26th December, 1740; 27th October, 1740.



use his good offices," they said, "we flatter ourselves Hadjee may be brought into better temper by his means." Their hopes were justified. On the 22nd February the English at Cassimbazar wrote, "Through the means and interest of Futtichand the salt affair is finished. He has engaged to Hadjee Hamet that the English will not in future give umbrage to the government by a traffic of this kind." They forwarded a copy of Haji Ahmad's perwanna to the governor of Rajmahal ordering him not to molest the owners of the salt in dispute and recommended that these people should reimburse the Company for the cost of the perwanna which had amounted to Rs. 12,000 paid to Haji Ahmad and Rs. 1193 to officers at the Durbar. "They think themselves very fortunate," they added, "to finish this affair for such a sum which is wholly owing to Futtichund's good offices and the Nabob being at so great a distance."<sup>219</sup>

In March 1741 the Company gave a note of hand to Jagat Seth Fateh Chand and Seth Anand Chand for Rs. 150,000. In November they paid off Rs. 50,000 of this and in March 1742 Jagat Seth's gomastah at Calcutta asked that the interest on this account might be made up and paid to him. The interest, calculated up to the 21st March, amounted to Rs. 12,000 and this sum was paid to Jagat Seth's gomastah on the 29th. At the same time a new note of hand for the balance of Rs. 100,000, payable on demand, and to carry interest at the rate of nine per cent, per annum, was given by the Company to Jagat Seth Fateh Chand and Seth Anand Chand.

On the same date the name of Seth Mahtab Rai, the son of Seth Anand Chand, appears in the records for the first time. Besides the note of hand for Rs. 100,000 mentioned above the Company's servants signed two other notes of hand, one for Rs. 110,000 and the other for Rs. 100,000, both payable to Jagat Seth Fateh Chand and Seth Anand Chand, and an additional note for Rs. 90,000 payable to Seth Mahtab Rai. The latter had now taken his father's place in the firm which, however, as late as 1750 when Fateh Chand had been dead six years, still figures in the records as the house of Jagat Seth Fateh Chand and Seth Anand Chand.<sup>220</sup>

219. Bengal Consultations, 1st February, 1741-42; 27th February, 1741-42.

220. Bengal Consultations, 29th March, 1742. \*

However the English did not use any one title consistently as the designation of the firm but Jagat Seth Fateh Chand and Seth Anand Chand, Jagat Seth Futtichund alone or Seth Mahtab Rai were all used indifferently. In fact when the four transactions mentioned above were settled the note of hand for Rs. 90,000 is ascribed to Jagat Seth Fateh Chand and one for Rs. 100,000 to Seth Mahtab Rai as the following extract from the Consulations dated the 15th November, 1742 shows "The President now laid before the Board the following Interest notes paid off pursuant to Order of Council the 8th Instant and They were now Cancelled at the Board.

To Juggatseat Futtichund—Dated 21st March, 1741-2.

Principal	...	...	100,000
Interest to 8th November 7			
mos. 18 days at 9 p.c. P.			
ann.	...	...	5,700
			105,700
Batta 15½ P. Cent.	...		16,383''8
			122083''8

To Jaggatseat Futtichund—Dated 26th March, 1741-2.

Principal	...	...	90000
Interest to do. 7 mos. 13			
das at Do.	...		3017''8
			95017''8
Batta 15½ P. Cent.	...		14727''10''6
			109745''2''6

To Juggatseat Futtichund and Anunchund dated do.

Principal	...	...	110,000
Interest to do. 7 mos. 13			
das at Do.	...		6,132''8
			116,132''8''
Batta 15½ P. Cent.	...		18,000''8''9
			134133''-''9.

To Seat Moubatry—dated ditto.

Principal	...	...	100000
Interest to do. 7 mos.	13		
das at Do.	...		5575
			<hr/>
			105575
Batta 15½ P. Cent.	...	16364''2''-	
			<hr/>
			121939''2''-
			<hr/>
			487900''13''3

A troublous period now befell the inhabitants of Bengal. In March 1742 reports began to reach Murshidabad that the Mahrattas had entered the province and were making their way to Birbhum. By the 3rd April people began to notice that Haji Ahmad and Jagat Seth Fateh Chand were extremely busy—the former in taking measures for the defence of the city and the latter in making preparations for sending away his family and treasure. The next day it transpired that Jagat Seth had received a letter from the raja of the invaded district announcing that he had fled to Birbhum from before the face of a force of upwards of 80,000 Mahratta horse who were plundering every place they came to and holding up the principal inhabitants to ransom. Day by day the news became more alarming. Calcutta was being put into a state of defence, the Mahrattas had reached Birbhum plundering and burning every town they passed and were marching on to Murshidabad. By the end of April there was not a merchant or man of note left at Murshidabad or Cassimbazar except those connected with the government. Jagat Seth and the officers of the durbar had sent away their families which, the English at Cassimbazar declared, “looks as if things did not go right.” 207 boats arrived at Calcutta and the report was spread abroad “of vast sum of money being imported by them”. Fifteen bags of rupees belonging to Jagat Seth undoubtedly arrived in the city at this time.<sup>221</sup>

Ominous reports began to be circulated about Alivardi

221. Bengal Consultations, 29th March, 1742; 5th April, 1742; 20th April, 1742; 22nd April, 1742; 26th April, 1742.

Khan and his army who were marching back from Orissa and were said to have reached Burdwan where the Nawab had been forced to entrench himself strongly. Haji Ahmad marched from Murshidabad with a reinforcement of 3,000 men but got no further than Cutwa and had to return for the Mahrattas were in strong force between Cutwa and Burdwan. They had invested the Nawab's camp, cut him off from all supplies of provisions and skirmishes were of daily occurrence between the two armies. Alivardi Khan managed to get a letter through to Haji Ahmad informing the latter that he was surrounded by the enemy who had demanded a krór of rupees as the price of their withdrawal but he stoutly declared "they shall have nothing from me." At length the Nawab attempted to force a passage through the Mahratta army and this brought on a general battle in which numbers fell on both sides but the Nawab succeeded in forcing his way through with about 3,500 horse. "On the 4th May, at night, Hadjee received a letter from the camp which he immediately carried into his private apartment and communicated it only to Futtichund and one or two more contrary to his usual custom". The English vakíl was able to send the purport of this letter to his employers from which they could see "the condition the Nabob and his army are in". This, indeed, was almost desperate. The Mahrattas were on his flanks and rear, his army was destitute of provisions but in spite of every obstacle he conducted a notable and successful retreat as far as Cutwa. Here he was in comparative safety for the river was open to him and reinforcements and supplies of provisions could reach him.<sup>222</sup>

• The rainy season was now approaching when the Mahrattas would be forced to retire but before retreating a renegade, named Mir Habib, promised the Mahratta general that if he would lend him a body of horse, he would bring him money enough to satisfy all his wishes. Eluding Alivardi Khan and his army he suddenly swooped down on Murshidabad, plundered the house of Jagat Seth "which they seemed to single out",<sup>223</sup> and carried away two krórs of rupees besides a quan-

222. Bengal Consultations, 26th April, 28th April, 3rd May, 12th May, 1742.

223. Bengal Consultation; 27th May, 1742.

tity of other goods. The translator of the Seir Mutaqherin was struck with the remarkable fact that this huge sum was all in rupees struck at Arcot and therefore but a fraction of Fateh Chand's wealth and adds "so amazing a loss which would distress any monarch in Europe, affected him so little, that he continued to give government bills of exchange at sight of full one cror at a time: and the fact is too notorious in Bengal to need any proof".

A far heavier blow in the estimation of Jagat Seth followed. The Mahrattas were enemies and their raid was one of the ordinary risks of war but after they had departed, either some of the Nawab's or Haji Ahmad's mercenaries plundered his house again and carried off what the Mahrattas had left. Therefore, although there was nothing more to fear from the Mahrattas for at least four months, Jagat Seth Fateh Chand fled from Murshidabad taking his two grand-sons with him. The Nawab sent officers to recall him but he refused to return and went on to Dacca. "How can I be in safety", he reasoned, "when there is no kind of government in the city"? Fateh Chand's arrival at Dacca on the 29th May produced such a panic in that place that had not the Diwan taken careful precautions not a person of any note would have remained in the city.<sup>224</sup>

The condition of affairs at Murshidabad on the 7th June may be seen in the following extracts from a letter received by the President and Council from Cassimbazar:—

"They are concerned to tell us that as yet none of their merchants who engaged for the silk piece goods are returned or any of the weavers to their abodes all the towns where most of those goods were made being destroyed and the weavers' looms burned with their houses. . . . In an aresdast to the Nabob and Hadjee Hamet they have represented the great loss and disappointment they have already suffered in their business and which must vastly increase unless authority be used to oblige their merchants to come and finish the contracts made but they fear the success of this petition for unless Juggatseat can be persuaded to return they believe few or none of the merchants will think it safe to do it, his conduct being the

224. Bengal Consultations, 3rd June, 1742; 7th June, 1742.

general guide to all of them. They hear of his arrival at Dacca and pretending sickness to all the Nabob's messengers who on the 6th dispatched the Cozzee<sup>225</sup> of Muxcidavad to entreat him to come back his presence being as necessary to the Government as to merchants. The Nabob and Hadjee have not seen one another for a week past and several presents sent by the former have been returned. It's said this difference was occasioned by some reflections the Nabob threw on the other's suffering the Morattoes to burn and plunder his camp and Juggatseat's house when he had twice their number. . . . Some imagine this a political quarrel but be it so or not their interest will not let it last long".<sup>226</sup>

A week later Jagat Seth returned to Murshidabad accompanied by most of the merchants but he left his two grandsons, Seth Mahtab Rai and Swarup Chand at Dacca. The aspect of affairs at Murshidabad did not tend to restore his confidence and he seemed anxious to place his hoards of wealth in safe hands. On the one hand he pressed the English at Cassimbazar to take a loan from him for the use of that factory and offered bills for Patna and Dacca if any money was wanted there. On the other hand he absolutely refused to buy bullion. When the English at Cassimbazar asked him whether he would do so his reply was "No, for what use could I make of bullion when no mint business goes forward? Nor can I know how to send what money I have clear away therefore want no new incumbrances". On July 12th the Council sent for Jagat Seth's gomastah at Hugli who happened to be in Calcutta at the time and used every possible argument to persuade him to buy bullion at that place but he was deaf to all their arguments assuring the Council that he had orders from his masters not to meddle with any bullion and that similar orders had been sent to Jagat Seth's gomastahs at Dacca and other places.<sup>227</sup>

Matters got worse instead of better. Contrary to expectation the Mahrattas did not leave the province for the rainy season and their raiders penetrated to the neighbourhood of Murshidabad itself. The Nawab gathered large forces to cope

225. Kāzi judge.

226. Bengal Consultation, 10th June, 1742.

227. Bengal Consultations, 18th June, 21st June; 5th July, 12th July, 1742.

with the invaders but his soldiers were as troublesome as the Mahrattas to the peaceful inhabitants of the province. They plundered everything they could lay their hands on and their victims were without redress. When the English at Cassimbazar complained to the Nawab of the many robberies committed near their factory he seemed heartily ashamed of them but did not care to venture on severe methods ; on the contrary he was obliged to wink at the disorders of his soldiers lest they should desert him. Not the least of the Nawab's difficulties from this time was to satisfy the demands of his soldiers for their pay and to keep them under some sort of control. Under these circumstances it is not surprising to find that on the 10th July the Company's servants at Cassimbazar wrote to the Council "The 8th at night Juggatseat left Muxcidavad and several of their merchants have left Cassimbazar and they fear many more will follow".<sup>228</sup>

A few days after Jagat Seth's return to Dacca the English at Cassimbazar borrowed a lak of rupees from him "he not caring to lend a less sum". In August when the Company's servants at Dacca inquired of Jagat Seth the terms on which he would lend them money he replied that he was ready to lend them any sum they pleased at nine per cent. They thought the terms too high at such a time and referred the matter to the Council at Calcutta who ordered them not to advance any more money for goods and this rendered borrowing unnecessary. However, in October they borrowed Rs. 40,000 of Jagat Seth at nine per cent. During his stay at Dacca Jagat Seth was able to do a service to the Company's servants at that place. Their boats had been stopped and their people ill-treated but when they applied to Jagat Seth for help he procured for them an order from the local Nawab directing that their boats should pass in future without molestation.<sup>229</sup>

In September the President had again written to Jagat Seth pressing him to buy the bullion sent out from England but once more Jagat Seth absolutely refused to purchase it while the

228. Bengal Consultations, 19th July, 1742; 9th September, 1742.

229. Bengal Consultations 29th July, 23rd August, 30th August, 13th October, 8th November, 1742.

troubles lasted. In November the President was more successful as the following resolution of the Council shows :—

“Being largely in Debt to Futtichund who has at length by Frequent Letters and Entreatys been prevailed on to take bullion in payment thereof at the same price as our Merchants have usually done only insisting that it should be exactly weighed off to him against Sicca Rupees as Customary at Cassimbazar and not to take the same at 9325 Sicca weight per each Chest which the Merchants do That being settled for the medium weight in President Hedges time.

Agreed That We discharge our Debt to Futtichund in Bullion on those terms.

Ordered That Fifty four Chests Bullion be taken out of the Treasury and delivered to the President for this purpose”.<sup>230</sup>

The particulars of this transaction have been recorded on a preceding page.

The date of Jagat Seth's return to Murshidabad is uncertain. At the end of September Alivardi Khan had gained a great victory over the Mahrattas and chased them out of the province. In October both the Nawab and Haji Ahmad had written to Jagat Seth asking him to return and “hoped he would”. In all probability he did so in November.<sup>231</sup>

. On January 23rd 1743 the Company's servants at Dacca requested the Council to send them three laks of rupees “to discharge their interest notes to Juggatseat who demands the same or to have the notes renewed as he closes his books in March as usual”. On the 2nd February they asked for permission to borrow a further sum of money from Jagat Seth to carry on their trade. The Council replied to both letters on the 10th stating that they were preparing to send a lak of rupees to Dacca to enable the Company's servants there to carry on their trade but “not being in cash” they were unable to send sufficient to discharge their debt to Jagat Seth. They therefore authorised the renewal of the notes if Jagat Seth's people insisted on it but would prefer the notes to run on without renewal until money could be sent to pay them off. The merchants at Dacca thought the latter course would be impossible as Jagat Seth

230. Bengal Consultation, 8th November, 1742.

231. Bengal Consultations, 4th October, 19th October, 1742.



insisted on all notes being either renewed or discharged when he balanced up his books in March. They informed the Council also they had been unable to wait for the lak of rupees and had borrowed the sum from Jagat Seth. At the end of the month they borrowed Rs. 60,000 more.<sup>232</sup>

On the same day the Company was brought into connection with Jagat Seth under another aspect—that of a minister of Alivardi Khan. The Nawab had just brought an expedition against Orissa to a successful conclusion and it was decided that the President should send a congratulatory arzdest to him on his return to Murshidabad with letters to Haji Ahmad and Fateh Chand on that occasion.<sup>233</sup>

In 1743 two bands of Mahrattas invaded Bengal—one from Patna and the other from the south. Murshidabad was again thrown into the utmost confusion and many of the inhabitants fled. Jagat Seth sent all his effects to Dacca and followed himself a day or two after. The Nawab and Haji Ahmad also sent off all their treasure to Dacca. Alivardi Khan faced the situation with his customary resolution and after buying off one party drove the other out of the province. The payment to the Mahrattas and the necessities of his own soldiers reduced the Nawab to the greatest straits for money and he began to fleece his people on all sides. Jagat Seth himself did not escape though what the Nawab had from him was not known.<sup>234</sup>

In August of this year occurred the second of the only two serious disputes that ever disturbed the friendly relations between Jagat Seth Fateh Chand and the English and as in the former case, neither party was much in fault. It arose out of

232. Bengal Consultations, 10th February, 1742-3; 18th February, 1742-3; 6th March, 1742-3.

233. Bengal Consultation, 10th February, 1742-3.

234. Bengal Consultations, 21st March, 1742-3; 7th April, 1743; 15th August, 1743.

Jagat Seth had returned by August, in fact his presence was indispensable. "It is wholly impracticable to raise money there (Cassimbazar)", wrote the Company's servants on the 6th June, "for never was so great a scarcity occasioned by the retreat of Futtichund and all the wealthy men towards Dacca." Bengal Consultations, 10th June, 1743. The Council notes on the 22nd August, "we observe the Nabob is endeavouring to reimburse himself some part of the great expense he has been at by fleecing Futtichund."

the two-fold nature of the trade in which the Company's servants were engaged. On the one hand they were trading for the benefit of the Company and on the other hand they were engaged in transactions for their own personal profit. This private trade was, of course, sanctioned by the Company and if the system had been equally understood at Murshidabad no harm, at least of the nature under consideration, would have resulted. But such was not the case. Indeed, up to this time it had always been the practice of the Company's servants to represent at the Durbar that all the trade was carried on for the Company's benefit only and to deny that there was any kind of trade apart from that.<sup>235</sup> Therefore when Fateh Chand lent money to Sir Francis Russell, Chief of the Cassimbazar factory, he naturally, after the latter's death, claimed the money from the Company. Sir Francis Russell had, however, borrowed the money for his own private trade and so the President and Council did not consider themselves responsible for the debt.

On the 11th August John Forster, the Chief of the factory at Cassimbazar, advised the Council "that Futtichund sent his Gomastah to the Chief with an interest note of Sir Francis Russell's for twenty five thousand sicca rupees and demanded payment thereof from the Company. The Chief answered him • that the Mayor's Court of Calcutta had appointed some of their body to administer Sir Francis Russell's effects who were now engaged in collecting them which when done there would be an equal distribution made among all his creditors. Futtichund's Gomastah replied that his master knew nobody but the Company that he had sent the money into that factory and expected to receive it back from thence that he had served the Company on many occasions and would still continue his good offices if they did not give him cause to act otherwise that there were two ways

235. Sir Francis Russell owed money to other merchants who complained to the Nawab and Chainray was told to inquire into the matter. On this the English at Cassimbazar wrote, "We apprehend the discussion thereof before Chainray will necessarily show that there is a trade carried on by the Hon'ble Company's Servants besides what is done on the Company's account which is what has been always denied at the Durbar where all the English trade is represented to be on the Company's account and they fear a conviction of the contrary may be attended with ill consequences" (Bengal Consultations 10th May, 1744).

of transacting this affair one by paying him with a good grace and thereby retaining his friendship or else by a refusal to oblige him to have recourse to methods that would be disagreeable to him and would break off all correspondence with them. The Chief told him that he would acquaint us with his demand and let him know our answer.

We will perceive by this discourse of the gomastah that Futtichund seems determined to have the money at all hazards and we are well acquainted with the great influence he has with the Government and as times are that they are fleecing on all sides and would doubtless be glad of a pretence to attack them it may be of the worst consequence to disoblige him but they refer it to our consideration and hope to have our orders thereon".

The Council held three meetings to consider the matter the upshot of which was that the Company's servants at Cassimbazar were directed to try and induce Fateh Chand to accept a compromise but if that were impossible to finish the affair on the best terms they could.

On the 11th September the Chief and Council at Cassimbazar reported that they had concluded the affair. "On the 8th", they wrote, "Futtichund's gomastah came to the factory and again demanded the debt due from Sir Francis Russell. They represented to him that Sir Francis Russell's effects would be insufficient to answer his debt and used their utmost endeavours to persuade him to accept of a composition but he would on no account agree to it. The most they could bring him to was to accept of the principal sum of 25,000 siccas and to forego the interest that was due thereon being upwards of 3,500 siccas. They desired him to represent their request to his master and to get him to accept of 15,000 siccas which they were willing to pay to retain his friendship. On the 10th Futtichund sent again to them and desired they would finish the affair without further scruples for that he would not take anything less than principal. As we recommended to them to end that affair on the best terms they could and as it appears to them to be for the Company's interest to keep Futtichund in good temper they thought proper to dispute with him no longer and have therefore given him an interest note dated the 10th inst. for 25,000 siccas at 9 per cent per annum on account of the Hon<sup>ble</sup> Company

and have received from him Sir Francis Russell's interest note for that sum of which they hope to have our approval. On their finishing that affair he seemed well pleased and sent back his gomastah to tell them that he hoped the mint would be opened after the Dusseray<sup>236</sup> and then he would let them know what quantity of silver they should send for".<sup>237</sup>

Omitting all further references to the commercial transactions between Fateh Chand and the English—to loans, payments of interest, repayment of loans and purchase of dollar silver—the Bengal records relate two more incidents in the life of Fateh Chand in one of which he appears again as the mediator between the Nawab and the English and in the other as the Nawab's confidential minister.

In 1744 the Mahrattas again invaded Bengal but on this occasion Alivardi Khan delivered the province from their ravages by the treacherous massacre of their general and officers to which allusion has been made on a preceding page. He had still, however, to satisfy his own troops and driven by their importunate demands for money and not, it is fair to add, acting from inclination, he began to fleece everybody, high and low, merchants, rajas and even his own relations. From the Europeans he demanded two months' pay for his army which meant a sum of 30 lakhs and threatened to stop their trade if they did not comply with his demands.<sup>238</sup>

The English sent their vakil to Fateh Chand to enquire why the Nawab had attacked them in this violent manner and to ask what he would advise them to do under the circumstances. He replied, "At present there is no government ; they fear neither God nor the King but seem determined to force money from everybody ; I myself have suffered greatly by them ; He advised them to write to the Council at Calcutta and by all means to get a speedy and satisfactory answer from them to the Nabob's demand and that they ought to make up matters with him in the quickest manner for delay would make their case worse". He promised that when they had got an answer from the Coun-

236. "Skt. dasahara, the "nine-nights" (or ten days') festival in October, also called Durga-puja." (Hobson-Jobson, p. 333).

237. Bengal Consultations, 22nd August, 26th August, 30th August, 19th September, 1743.

238. Bengal Consultations, 12th July, 1744.

cil he and Chainray would join in representing their case to the Nawab in a most favourable manner.

On the 10th July the English wakil was taken into the presence of the Nawab "who was sitting with his officers about him". The Nawab declared that when the English obtained their farman from the Emperor Farrukhsiyar they had only four or five ships but since that time their trade had vastly increased and he had received orders from the reigning Emperor to oblige them to pay duty on that increase for many years past—orders which he intended to obey. He reminded the wakil that he had formerly had occasion to complain of the assistance the English had given to the Mahrattas and complained that though he had excused them for that fault "yet they had never so much as thought of him or offered him so much as the hair of a horse's tail." The interview concluded with a warning from the Nawab that he would wait two or three days more for an answer from Calcutta but if it did not arrive in that time he would send forces on the factories at Calcutta and Cassimbazar and force the English to comply with his demand. The wakil then went to see Haji Ahmad who advised them to make the Nawab a proper offer. The same advice was given them by Fateh Chand who added that the Nawab would not be satisfied without a large present.

The Company's servants at Cassimbazar were permitted to offer the Nawab a present of between forty and fifty thousand rupees. On the 22nd July they wrote that in accordance with these instructions they "have offered by the means of Chainray and Futtichund (whom the Nabob has appointed to adjust matters with them) as far as 50,000 rupees for the Nabob and his officers upon which they told their vacqueels that the offer bore so little proportion to the Nabob's demand that they did not dare mention it to him. Their vacqueels alleged the injustice of the Nabob's demand and showed them how ill grounded his reasons were, they also represented to them the great expenses the Hon'ble Company had been at and the considerable losses they had suffered in the late troubles. Futtichund replied these reasons might be of weight at another season but that at present the Government was in great want of money to pay the troops necessary for the preservation of the country and all the traders in it that the Nabob was taking money from every person

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in the province and expected a large sum from us ; he concluded with advising them to write again to us to learn how much we were willing to give towards satisfying the Nabob's demand. On the 21st they again sent their vacquels to Chainray and Futtichund with orders to learn if possible the Nabob's real intention, and what he expects. In this conference Futtichund told them they must not imagine the present Government to be like what they had known formerly when it had been in his power to soften them and bring them to easy terms for these people were violent, rapacious and deceitful and it was impossible to say how far the Nabob would go to attain his ends. Their vacqueel pressing to know what he thought the Nabob would be contented with, he replied it was impossible to learn the Nabob's mind, that his demand was two months' pay for his troops which he valued at 20 Laack of rupees that it could not be supposed he would abate above half so that he would expect at least ten Laack from the three European Nations, that if we would empower him to offer five laack for four shares he would use his utmost endeavours to get it accepted and that the French and Dutch had already agreed to pay such share as should be allotted them as soon as the Nabob had settled with us. To this discourse Chainray added that in case we offered within 40 and 50,000 rupees of the above sum he would endeavour to get it accepted. This is all they could get out of these ministers to be depended on but Futtichund in the above conference speaking of the smallness of the late offer told the vacqueels that they had to his knowledge paid a much larger sum in Sujah Doulah's time and bid them look into their accompts and they would find it so. As this seemed to be a hint whether accidentally or designedly dropt they examined the cash accounts of that time, and found in the year 1731 that there was paid to the Durbar by the means of Futtichund 184,500 siccas, the particulars whereof they enclose for our inspection. . . . . It is impossible for them to know whether Futtichund hinted this as if the like offer would be accepted in the present case but from the violent measures pursued they are of opinion that a less offer would be rejected. . . . . Their business is entirely stopped none of their merchants being suffered to bring any thing into their factory and they are every day threatened to have forces sent to surround them."

On the 27th the merchants at Cassimbazar wrote :—  
“Their vacqueels daily wait on Futtichund, Chainray and Hadje Hamet but all they can get from them is that when they are impowered to make offers then they can speak.” The information they had received from the most influential quarters led them to the conclusion that the Nawab’s design was “to fleece the whole country without having regard to any advantage he may expect from it in future.” Every person who was reputed to have money was seized and whipped until he disgorged his wealth while sums of 500 and 1,000 rupees were taken from “those who had not double the sum in the world.” Three laks had been demanded from one of their merchants and Fateh Chand commenting on this had remarked to their vakils “If the Nawab will have three laks from one of your merchants what will he expect from you?”

The Council at Calcutta advanced to Rs. 1000,000 but when this offer was made to Fateh Chand and Chainray they pointed out that it was greatly disproportionate to the Nawab’s expectations and declared they could not mention it to him. Had four or five laks been offered they would not have failed in their utmost endeavours to get it accepted but as the English were resolved to give no more than one lak all they could do was “to sit still and see what further measures the Nabob would pursue.” Their fear was that he would proceed to violence. “As these ministers talk in this strain,” the Company’s servants wrote, “we are at a loss how to proceed.” The only bright spot in their affairs was the fact that there was a division among the Nawab’s counsellors “his old ones having advised him to gentle methods and his new ones push him on to violent measures.”

The Company decided to send a petition to the Nawab in which it was pointed out that whenever a dispute had arisen between the Company and the Government it had been customary to refer their case to Fateh Chand and such officers of the Durbar as had a thorough knowledge of their affairs.

On the 7th August the English at Cassimbazar wrote :—  
“Their vacqueels waited on the Nabob with their petition. He laid hold of the part of it wherein they represented it had been usual to refer all disputes with Government to Futtichund &ca Mutsuddys of the Durbar and replied when did he deny

the having their affairs accommodated by Futtichund &ca and turning to his secretary bid him carry their vacqueels immediately to Futtichund and Chainray and order them to settle with them. These ministers told the vacqueels that indeed the Nabob had ordered them to settle matters but how could they do it when the Nabob's demand and their offers were so widely different—the Nabob had abated nothing of 25 Laack and they had offered but one tho' they said they had of their own hands offered 50,000 more but that the Nabob would not hearken to it for that Mustapha Cawn had told him that he would get 25 Laack out of the English. Their vacqueels replied they might be well assured that they should never pay any such sum. Futtichund and Chainray then said the Nabob did not expect this sum from the Company and was regardless whether they gave the Laack they offered or not but he expected that we should raise the sum he demands among the merchants under our protection and from the number of rich persons fled to Calcutta in the time of the late trouble and since the Nabob's circumstances at present are such that in order to pay the forces he has raised for the defence of the country after having expended the revenues of the province and all his own wealth he is now forced to take money from his own relations and servants he thinks it highly reasonable that the inhabitants of Calcutta and all people protected there who have hitherto carried on their business scotfree should assist him in this emergency by paying their share and he wills that we should tax them as we think proper, and if any refuse to pay the proportion we think fit to assign that we have only to send them to him and he will oblige them to a compliance. Their vacqueels represented this as unprecedented and that if we could not protect our merchants from the Government's demands it would be impossible to carry on our business. Futtichund said this was an extraordinary case and would not be brought into precedent besides how should we be able to avoid it. The Nabob had stopped our business there, at Patna and Dacca and all the aurgings by which means he had all our money and goods in his power and he would certainly plunder them if they did not find a way to satisfy him otherwise that he and his officers had come to a resolution of attacking that factory but was



prevailed on by Hadjee, Chainray and Futtichund to forbear the attempt now but could not answer for what violence he might be drove to at last that the Nabob had actually sent for the merchants' gomastahs from all the aurungs and would oblige them to bring their goods to Murshidabad by which means he would not only get all he could from their merchants but also retain his demand on the Hon'ble Company which would occasion our loss on all sides. Futtichund concluded with advising them to get immediately such an offer from us as he might propose to the Nabob with some hopes of succeeding for on the present terms they could neither bring them nor the Nabob to an agreement."

The next day Fateh Chand and Chainray waited on the Nawab who asked them what they had settled in regard to the English. "They answered it was impossible for them to come to a conclusion as he was pleased not to abate anything of his demand of 25 laack and the English advanced nothing upon their one laack, upon which the Nabob remained silent." Whatever may have been the nature of the Nawab's thoughts his necessities drove him to declare that if the English did not comply with his demands he would plunder all factories "not that the Nabob would willingly pursue these violent measures," Fateh Chand informed the English, "or wanted by these means to enrich himself but he was obliged to get sufficient to pay the arrears due to his troops even at the risk of his life for the military officers were impatient and daily importuned him to give them orders to fall on them and the aurungs." He urged them "if they had regard for the Company's money or goods or even for their own lives" to satisfy the Nawab.

Two days later Chainray said to the English wakil—"The Nawab has acquainted Futeh Chand with his last resolution in regard to the English, which Fateh Chand will keep in his own breast and advise nobody of. It is now your business to let Fateh Chand know the utmost you will give. This must be large. Two laks will not be regarded. You should let no one know the sum you offer but Fateh Chand who by comparing what you offer with what the Nawab expects will have it in his power to be moderator between both parties and thereby enabled to bring the affair to a conclusion. . . . ."

You are much mistaken if you imagine that at length the Government will hear reason for I must tell you, if you do not already perceive it that there is now no Government in Bengal nor hardly anything of the province remaining but the name. The Nawab's Council are guided by the will of the soldiers who will not suffer him to spare even his own relations but oblige him to take money from all persons without distinction."

The President and Council at Calcutta held out till the end of August but on the 28th they directed John Forster, the Chief at Cassimbazar, to finish the affair on the best terms he could within a limit of four laks. Forster settled the dispute for three and a half laks of rupees and on the 16th September reported to the Council:—"On the 15th Futtichund came to their Factory by the Nabob's Order and brought them Perwannahs for the Hon'ble Company's Business at Hughley, Patna, Dacca and all the Aurungs. . . . The Chief acquainting the Gentlemen of Council that he had been obliged to agree to the Payment of three Laak of Rupees and a half to the Nabob in order to the accommodation and Futtichund demanding Payment thereof as he had given a full Currency to their Business they were forced to desire him to lend them the Money at Interest which he readily agreed to and they accordingly gave him their Interest Note for Three Laack and Fifty Thousand Sicca Rupees. We will please to supply them when we think proper with Money to Pay off their Debts to him and others which now amount to 540,000 Siccas."<sup>239</sup>

By October all ill feeling arising from the dispute had been dispelled. On the 20th the Company's servants at Cassimbazar wrote:—"That day Futtichund came to their factory by the Nabob's order to acquaint them of his good intention towards the English and as a proof thereof he delivered to the Chief a letter from the Nabob under his seal to the President which he desired the Chief to deliver with his own hand as he heard he was soon to go down and that a seerpaw and elephant were getting ready and should be sent to the factory within the space of four days to be forwarded to the President,

239. Bengal Consultations, 13th July, 21st July, 25th July, 28th July, 6th August, 13th August, 18th September, 1744.

They take the liberty to remark that this is there looked upon as an extraordinary mark of favour and will be expected to be received accordingly. The Nawab's mark of favour was received in Calcutta on the 5th December with appropriate ceremony and a compliment of fifty seven guns.<sup>240</sup>

A glimpse of Fateh Chand as the Nawab's confidential adviser is given in the Consultation dated 16th November, 1744 which runs thus:—"John Forster Esq. acquaints us that when he visited the Nabob after having sat a short time with him in Publick he carried him into a Private Room with Futtichund and Chainray he then told him that by the advices he had received by his spies he Expected the Return of the Morattoes this Season with a Large Army, and that he should soon set out to oppose them, but as his people were not trained up to the use of Fire Arms as the Europeans, he desired Mr. Forster would supply him with 30 or 40 of our Soldiers and an English officer to Command them that it should be no Expense to the Company for he would give them such Pay as Mr. Forster should Stipulate he then said, he had one thing more to ask which was a fine Arab horse for his own Riding and that if there was one in Calcutta he desired he might have him." A horse was purchased for 2750 rupees and sent to the Nawab but the military aid was refused.

That is the last incident in the life of Fateh Chand of which there is any record. On the 28th December the Company's servants at Cassimbazar wrote:—"The 26th in the morning died Futtichund. He has left his vast wealth to his grandsons Moutabray and Sooroochund by whom it's supposed the business of the house will be carried on as usual. They believe letters of compliment to them from the President would be proper."<sup>241</sup>

The death of his two sons and the anarchy in Bengal which was a result of the invasions of the Mahrattas cast a gloom over the last years of Jagat Seth Fateh Chand but in the thirty years of his control of the banking house at Murshidabad he had raised it in power and wealth and make its name celebrated throughout Hindostan. His reputation as a banker among the Company's servants in Bengal was very high. The year before

240. Bengal Consultations, 24th October, 1744; 5th December, 1744.

241. Bengal Consultation, 4th January, 1744-5.

he died, under pressure from the Nawab, he reluctantly consented to buy a quantity of silver from the English and offered them a price for it but in the hope that the whole transaction would fall to the ground he suddenly lowered the price. This action of his came upon the English as a starting surprise for, as they said, Fateh Chand had always been most scrupulous in keeping his word.<sup>242</sup> His wealth made a great impression on the minds of his contemporaries. In the opinion of Holwell he was the greatest banker and the most opulent subject in the world<sup>243</sup> while the author of the *Seir Mutaqherin* declared that his fortune was past all belief. Orme, writing of Fateh Chand, says:—"There was a family of Gentoo merchants at Muxadavad whose head, Juggut Seat, had raised himself from no considerable origin to be the wealthiest banker in the empire, in most parts of which he had agents supplied with money for remittances, from whom he constantly received good intelligence of what was transacting in the governments in which they were settled. In Bengal his influence was equal to that of any officer of the administration ; for by answering to the treasury as security for most of the renters farming the lands of the province, he knew better than any one all the details of the revenue ; while the great circulation of wealth which he commanded rendered his assistance necessary in every emergency of expense."<sup>244</sup>

242. "They have endeavoured to learn a reason for Futtichund's shuffling so unaccountably in this affair as he was formerly remarkable for keeping punctually (punctiliously?) to his first word and are informed by Roopchund his Gomastah with whom he is most intimate that he does it to avoid taking our Bullion which the Nabob presses him to bring into the mint, but that Atoulukan and Chainray having a large (larger?) state in the management thereof than Futtichund he is disgusted besides fears he shall be a long time in getting it coined for whereas he formerly had five days in the week to coin in he can now hardly have the use of the Mint for one day in the week and if the Mahottaes should return (of which he has some apprehension) before the silver is coined it may lay (sic) long on his hands : he therefore tells the Nabob he can't get it because we ask too high a price and offers us a low price that we may not let him have it or at least delay the time till he can be more certain whether the Mahottes will return or not" (Bengal Consultation, 22nd November, 1743).

243. Interesting Historical Events.

244. Orme.

### CHAPTER 3.

#### JAGAT SETH MAHTAB RAI AND MAHARAJA SWARUP CHAND

The letters of compliment of the President of the English Company in Bengal were sent to "the grandson of Futtichund deceased,"<sup>1</sup> that is, to Seth Mahtab Rai, as if he, and he alone, had stepped into the place of Jagat Seth Fateh Chand. In reality, the affairs of the house were administered jointly by him and his cousin, Swarup Chand, the son of Dya Chand, and so closely connected were they in all their dealings that they were commonly regarded as brothers. For a few years the names of Mahtab Rai and Swarup Chand are coupled together by the English when they record their transactions with the banking house at Murshidabad though sometimes habit proved too strong and, forgetful of his death, they still continued to record transactions with Fateh Chand and Fateh Chand's house, while, as has been pointed out, Jagat Seth Fateh Chand and Seth Anand Chand persisted as the title of the firm for many years. Before long the actual names of the two heads of the house dropped out of use and they were usually referred to by Europeans as the Seths. To Seth Mahtab Rai alone descended the title of Jagat Seth though for some reason which cannot now be ascertained, he did not receive the farman of the Emperor Ahmad Shah confirming him in the title till the year 1748. His cousin, Swarup Chand, was ennobled with the title of Maharaja.

We have seen the condition of Bengal at the time of the death of Jagat Seth Fateh Chand and this period of war and confusion so detrimental and hateful to peaceful bankers and merchants continued for seven years longer. Year after year the track of the Mahrattas was marked by plundered villages and blazing towns while in front of them the inhabitants fled across the great river to the comparative security of eastern Bengal. To Mahratta invasions were added revolts of Pathan

1. Bengal Consultations, 15th January, 1744-5.

soldiers of fortune whom Alivardi Khan enlisted in his armies. Alivardi Khan met all the dangers that menaced him with a dauntless spirit that brought success in its train until, in 1751, an old man worn out with the fatigues of war, he purchased peace by the cession of Orissa to the Mahrattas and an annual payment of 12 laks of rupees. In the annals of these years of warfare there is scant reference to Mahtab Rai and Swarup Chand but they played their part in the mustering of the troops and the marching of the armies with which Alivardi Khan faced his enemies year after year. They were admitted into the most secret councils of the Nawab, they were entrusted with almost all his financial affairs, whenever there was a prospect of peace they were active in promoting it, and when war had to be waged they provided the means. At the time of Alivardi Khan's greatest peril to which a reference was made in the last chapter, when the ordinary resources of the province were exhausted and money was required for the pay of the soldiers they contributed "mighty sums" from their own fortune.

But though the historians of warfare have few occasions to mention the Seths the records of the English merchants in Bengal contain frequent references to them. At no previous period had the Company relied so much on the bankers at Murshidabad for the means of carrying on their trade in Bengal and never before had they owned such large sums to them. The reason of this is not far to seek. It was difficult to obtain money from any other source. The extortions of Alivardi Khan had driven most bankers and rich merchants to hide their wealth and profess poverty so that rupees became very scarce in Bengal. But the vessel of the Seths survived the storm in which so many were submerged though even they had to furl their sails, partly from the great scarcity of money, partly to keep the demands of the government upon them within bounds and partly owing to the many calls upon them from all parts of the province.

Most of the references to the Seths in the Bengal records at this period deal with the purchase of bullion and negotiations for loans. The two cousins agreed to take the Company's bullion but only at the price fixed by Fateh Chand in the previous year which was 203 rupees for 240 sicca rupees' weight

of dollar silver and Rs. 2 As. 7 Pies 3 for ducations. In June, 1735 when the Company had 40 chests to dispose of the merchants at Cassimbazar proposed to raise the price to what Fateh Chand had formerly paid for the Company's silver but the Seths absolutely refused to make any advance alleging "that it was not owing to them but the Government that the price was lowered."<sup>2</sup>

Probably owing to the falling off of trade in Bengal during these years of trouble the money sent from England seems barely to have sufficed for the needs of the factory at Calcutta so that the factories at Cassimbazar, Dacca and Patna had, to a great extent, to rely on the Seths for the means of carrying on their investments. In July 1745 the Company's servants at Dacca applied to Jagat Seth's house at that place for Rs. 50,000 but received the answer "they had neither sicca nor Arcot rupees." They requested the Council at Calcutta to induce Jagat Seth to order his gomastah to supply them with money "as no other shroff there can answer what they want," but when the Company's servants at Cassimbazar, acting on instructions from Calcutta, applied to the Seths for a bill of a lak of rupees on their house at Dacca the bankers' reply was that "they have no money there, therefore cannot draw." Thereupon the Seths were asked to provide the money as an advance on account of the bullion they had received "which they promised to do as fast as they could get it minted for rupees are so very scarce they cannot pay them till then. They have yet taken away but thirty chests of the bullion and paid but fifty thousand rupees on the account which before the receipt of our orders they had employed. . . . They promise to send them fifteen thousand rupees in four days, which they shall immediately dispatch to Dacca and send the remainder when it comes in but if they can borrow sufficient they shall send it sooner tho' they despair of borrowing from the scarcity of rupees at the present time." On the 5th August the Company's servants were able to dispatch Rs. 50,000 to Dacca and the information that Mahtab Rai and Swarup Chand had ordered their gomastah at Dacca to supply the factory with Rs. 50,000 more. "However," wrote the Company's servants at Dacca on the 23rd,

2. Bengal Consultations, 8th January, 1744-5, 24th June, 1745.

"upon applying to him he sent word he could not let them have any money which they represented to the gentlemen at Cossimbazar desiring them to supply them with the other fifty thousand rupees." The merchants at Cassimbazar applied immediately to Mortobray and Soroopchund to know why their promise of supplying Dacca factory was not complied with. They told them that they had heard from their gomastah that the reason of this refusal was that he had been much troubled by the Dacca Government about the value of sicca rupees and therefore would not disburse any more without fresh orders from them. They had sent such positive orders then that the sum wanted should be immediately advanced." On the 17th September the merchants informed the Council that the advance had been received. Meanwhile a week or two previously the new sicca rupees "had come out by the means of Futtichund's family."<sup>3</sup>

Again in October the Company's servants at Dacca applied to Jagat Seth's house for a lak of rupees and again the gomastah sent them word that "he had no sicca rupees" but "if they would get an order from his master he would supply them." When the English at Cassimbazar applied for this order the Seths assured them it had been sent to their gomastah "but as they have such large drafts upon them other ways the Gentlemen at Dacca must be content with receiving such sums as their gomastah is in cash to supply them with by ten or twenty thousand rupees at a time." However on the 25th October the Dacca factory received a loan of Rs. 100,000 from Jagat Seth's house there.<sup>4</sup>

• In 1746 the factory at Cassimbazar was in difficulties and in April begged the Council to supply them with money. "For the most they can take up of Futtichund and the other shroffs there will not be more than one hundred and fifty thousand rupees." The Council applied to the Seth's gomastah at Hugli, "Who returned us for answer," they record, "that he is not in cash but says that he will write to his principals and advises us to write to them also to desire them to supply the factory

3. Bengal Consultations, 17th July, 29th July, 8th August, 31st August, 2nd September, 1745.

4. Bengal Consultations, 14th October, 28th October, 2nd November, 1745.



at Cossimbuzar with what money the Chief and Council there may want." The President wrote to Mahtab Rai and Swarup Chand and the letter was delivered to the latter who said "he could not supply them with any money at present it being dispersed in many parts of the country but believed he should be able to do it in a month's time."<sup>5</sup>

At the same time the Company renewed two interest notes for sums borrowed from the Seths requesting them that the interest due on them might be added to the principal—a sufficient proof of the difficulties of the Company. These two notes with the interest added to them amounted to Rs. 272,500 and this sum was increased in a few months by Rs. 50,000.<sup>6</sup>

In May the Company's servants at Cassimbazar reported that they had borrowed a lak of rupees but the most they could hope to borrow in addition, was a further lak "for the scarcity of money is so great that it has been with some difficulty Futtichund's house has been able to pay for the bullion sold them ; at least it appears to them that if they have money they don't care to produce it for fear of the Government." In July, however, all their efforts to take up money at interest had been unsuccessful and they were quite unable to carry on their investment. From Dacca came the same complaint. All the efforts of the English there to obtain money at nine per cent. were fruitless and the Council had ordered them on no account to borrow money at a higher rate.<sup>7</sup>

Luckily in October 70 chests containing 50,000 rupees' weight of silver were landed at Calcutta and the President wrote to Jagat Seth Mahatab Rai asking him to purchase it and advance two lacs of rupees—a lak of which was to be sent to Dacca. As the country was in a very unsettled state at this time the President asked Jagat Seth to receive the silver at his house in Calcutta instead of at Cassimbazar as was usual. Jagat Seth Mahtab Rai agreed to take the silver but times were hard and his terms less favourable than those of former times. His gomastah informed the Company's servants at Cassimbazar that his master would advance what they wanted, viz., an order for

5. Bengal Consultations, 19th April, 23rd April, 3rd May, 1746.

6. Bengal Consultations, 5th May, 1746.

7. Bengal Consultations, 30th June, 21st July, 5th September.

a lak of rupees on his house at Dacca, a lak to send to Calcutta and Rs. 50,000 for their own use "provided they allowed him one per cent. on the bill to Dacca as customary and in consideration of his giving the Cossimbuzar price for the bullion which he said would sell in Calcutta for no more than 197 rupees and bearing the charges and risk of bringing it to Muxadavad not to be accountable for any interest for one month from the time the bullion was received in Calcutta." The President and Council wrote to the Company's servants at Cassimbazar when they received this news:—"We think they act the unhandsome part with regard to the one per cent. they require for their bill to Dacca. They must represent to them that we did not use to be treated in his manner by that family, Futtichund using to give us orders on his house at Dacca free when we were to receive the money from him, however if they insisted on it we cannot help it and must comply therewith and as they will expect not to be accountable for any interest for one month from the time money bullion was received in Calcutta. . . . it must be allowed of if they cannot persuade them to give it up."<sup>8</sup>

The year 1747 saw no improvement in trade in Bengal. In February the Dacca merchants informed the Council that they were quite out of cash and had no hopes of getting any there. An opportune arrival of 30 chests of bullion which were sent to Cassimbazar and sold to Jagat Seth Mahtab Rai enabled the Company to obtain an advance of a lak and a half of rupees from Jagat Seth's house but only at the expense of complaints from the Company's servants at Cassimbazar who wrote "the withdrawing this money from them when the debts there are so great and credit at the lowest ebb, when those who were clamorous before gave them on the arrival thereof no manner of disturbance what may not be expected when they see so large a part of what was sent them at once vanished and what the consequences may be we will best discover being fully persuaded themselves that nothing but the greatest emergency could occasion it." The Council pacified them with a promise to send more bullion but when this arrived at Cassimbazar the Seths could not be prevailed upon to take it away "on account

one while of the troubles in the country and lately that the business of the mint was stopped though they have at length promised to send for it in three or four days and have given them to understand that for any more that may come up they will give no more than 201 sicca rupees per 240 sicca weight alleging by way of excuse to the imposition that the profit thereon is not near so great as formerly occasioned by rupees being made of finer silver than usual.”<sup>9</sup>

In the latter half of 1747 the English merchants at Cassimbazar were in want of funds, those at Dacca were clamouring for a lak of rupees while the Nawab was also in the greatest distress for want of money to pay his troops. From these known facts it is evident that the demands on the Seths from all parts of the province must have been enormous and it is not surprising that their terms of doing business became more stringent. With regard to the English Company they persisted for some time in refusing to give more than 201 rupees for 240 sicca rupees’ weight of silver and complained to the President that it had always been usual at Cassimbazar to pay off the interest due to them at the end of the year whereas the Company were now in the habit of adding interest to principal and giving fresh notes for the whole amount.<sup>10</sup>

On the 10th August the Council ordered the Company’s servants at Cassimbazar to use their utmost endeavours to keep up the price of silver and to represent to Jagat Seth Mahtab Rai in the strongest manner that it would not be worth while to bring it from Europe at the price he offered. “They well know that house must be kept in temper”, the Council added, “therefore we direct that the interest of his notes be paid off and that they endeavour to get him to order the gentlemen at Dacca some money—if not a laack at least fifty thousand rupees as they advise us they cannot go on. . . . without a supply”.<sup>11</sup>

On the 26th Council received a reply from Cassimbazar to the effect that immediately after the receipt of their letter of the 10th “Ruidass one of the Seats’ principal gomastahs came there to demand the interest on their notes for two years past altho’

9. Bengal Consultations, 21st February, 1746-7, 23rd March, 1746-7, 11th April, 1747, 23rd June, 1747.

10. Bengal Consultations, 25th June, 9th July, 10th August, 1747.

11. Bengal Consultations, 10th August, 1747.

they had some time before freely consented (upon their representation how useful it would be to the Company) to the renewal of their Notes with the interest added thereto which was accordingly done upon their assuring them the interest should be paid off on the arrival of the Europe ships. They can't help therefore concluding but that they must have some other cause for this unexpected measure taken than what avowed and what confirms them the more in this opinion was their lending them unasked twenty two thousand rupees to give the Nabob. Their being obliged to pay off the interest of these notes which has swept away the amount of the twenty chests of treasure puts them under the greatest difficulties as to the carrying on their investment which we must be sensible of from the small balances of cash and treasury accounts which come enclosed Agreeable to our orders they applied to the Seats for a laack of rupees for Dacca factory but could procure no more than a bill of twenty five thousand rupees which they sent the gentlemen there by express cossids the 17th instant. The Seats have at length agreed to allow two hundred and three sicca rupees for the bullion tho' Ruidass with much warmth asked how they could except it when to his knowledge bullion had been sold in Calcutta by the Company's merchants at one hundred and ninety seven rupees ten annas. If this be true their late behaviour to them may easily be accounted for ".<sup>12</sup>

The Seths consistently aimed at monopolising the purchase of all silver in the province and the fact that the Company had disposed of some elsewhere was certain to have caused great offence to them. The Company thought it advisable to furnish the Seths with an explanation of the occurrence "with which", wrote the Company's servants at Cassimbazar, "they seemed satisfied but we have not been able to prevail with them to lend us any more money tho' we have made frequent applications to them on that account and we despair of getting any from them or elsewhere till the arrival of some of our Hon'ble Masters' ships".<sup>13</sup>

A few days afterwards the ships arrived with thirty chests of bullion and on the 25th September the Council "having taken

12. Bengal Consultations, 26th August, 1747.

13. Bengal Consultations, 28th August, 23rd September, 1747.

into consideration how to dispose thereof and Seat Mautobray having wrote several times to the President to discharge an interest note given in Calcutta being on his own private account we think it necessary to keep him in temper as we can nowhere sell our bullion but to that house.

Agreed therefore that five chests be set apart to pay off part of his interest note and that twenty chests be sent to Cossimbuzar to be sold to Jugutseat's house and that they be desired to order us to the amount of ten chests of rupees to be paid by his house in Calcutta for the currency of our business here and that the amount of the other ten chests be used for their investment there and that the remaining five chests be kept for our use here''. At the same time the Council wrote to Cassimbazar directing the merchants there to assure the Seths that a further large supply of bullion was expected daily "with which news they seemed well pleased and very readily agreed to pay for the bullion in the manner desired but said they could not think of giving more than 201 for 240 sicca weight" and in the end the silver had to be delivered to them at that price.<sup>14</sup>

In January 1748 the Council ordered the merchants at Cassimbazar to let the Seths know that the Company had one hundred chests of silver ready to deliver them either at Calcutta or Cassimbazar, out of which they were to pay themselves two laks of rupees in part of what was owing to them, advance a lak of rupees to the Cassimbazar factory, Rs. 50,000 to the Dacca factory and send the remainder to Calcutta.<sup>15</sup>

The President also wrote to Jagat Seth Seth Mahtab Rai on the subject but before the end of January the Nawab received news from Patna which nearly caused his utter ruin. Zainuddin Ahmad, his son-in-law, who was Governor of Behar, had foolishly taken into his service a former general of Alivardi Khan's together with 1,200 Pathans and these men had treacherously assassinated the Governor, imprisoned Haji Ahmad, seized the city, joined the Mahrattas and were advancing on Bengal. This news put an end to all business at Murshidabad.

The Bengal Consultations of the 8th February record:—  
"The President yesterday received a letter from Seat Mauto-

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14. Bengal Consultations, 25th September, 9th October, 19th October, 1747.

15. Bengal Consultations, 25th January, 1747-8.

bray in answer to what he had wrote to him about the Company's bullion wherein he says that he has been always ready to forward the Company's business and to take the Bullion off their hands and should do so now if it was in his power but the Accident which has lately happened at Patna has thrown everything into such confusion every one flying to save his life that he himself has taken leave of the Nabob and has got across the great River. That the Mint is shut up and he has no rupees to supply us with therefore desires to be excused doing any business till the Affairs in the Country are in a more settled condition''.

Alivardi Khan's proceedings at this time of great stress have been narrated in the last chapter but in spite of the resolute manner in which he faced the crisis lack of money nearly brought disaster upon him. The Nawab resorted to extortion and by this means obtained a small sum but at the price of driving all the bankers remaining at Murshidabad out of the city.<sup>16</sup> The sum raised was quite inadequate for when he reached Khamrah, about twenty miles from Murshidabad, his soldiers refused to proceed unless they received a further payment.<sup>17</sup> It must have been at this critical juncture that Jagat Seth Mahtab Rai contributed the "mighty sums" spoken of in the Seir Mutaqherin. On the 21st March, a week afterwards, Alivardi Khan had crossed the borders of Behar. On the 23rd April he had gained a victory over the revolted general and on the 2nd December he was back at Murshidabad triumphant over all his enemies.<sup>18</sup>

In the same month the Governor of Hugli made a complaint against the English and this complaint caused a great deal of trouble to the Company until the matter was settled in the following October. England and France were at war and a King's ship had seized two vessels laden with goods belonging to Armenian and Muhammadan merchants of Hugli and containing besides presents for the Nawab. In January, 1749 Alibardi Khan wrote to the Governor: "The merchants are the kingdom's benefactors, their Imports and Ex-

16. Bengal Consultations, 26th March, 1748.

17. Bengal Consultations, Ibid.

18. Bengal Consultations, 2nd May, 5th December, 1748.

ports are an advantage to all men, and their complaints are so grievous that I cannot forbear any longer giving ear to them. As you were not permitted to commit piracies therefore I now write you that on receipt of this you deliver up all the Merchants' goods, and effects to them as also what appertains unto me, otherwise you may be assured a due chastisement in such manner as you least expect". The Chief at Cassimbazar thought that the letter had probably been sent to appease the clamours of the Armenians and that the gift of a fine Arab horse to the Nawab would smoothen matters over. But the Nawab was in earnest. The Company's trade was stopped throughout the province. At Dacca the supply of provisions was cut off until the Company's servants, declaring that it was better to die fighting than starving, threatened to help themselves wherever they could. The factory at Cassimbazar was surrounded with troops and at length the English were compelled to come to terms. The Rev. James Long in his "Unpublished Extracts from the Records of Government" states that the English first tried to propitiate the Nawab through the Seths but the demands of the "two favourites" were too high—4 lakhs for the Nawab and Rs. 30,000 for themselves and adds "at last after much negotiation the Armenians expressing themselves satisfied the Nawab becomes reconciled, but the English got off after paying to the Nawab through the Seets 12,00,000 rupees."<sup>19</sup>

12,00,000 is a mere slip of the pen for 1,20,000 but the allegation that the Seths demanded Rs. 30,000 for themselves is a more serious matter and quite incorrect. The statement made in a former chapter that the Seths never received a bribe for their services to the Company still holds good. Jagat Seth Mahtab Rai and Maharaja Swarup Chand were naturally disposed to continue the friendly relations which had subsisted between their house and the English and to render help to the Company when difficulties arose with the Government. Two years before the Council record that Mahtab Rai had been "very assisting"<sup>20</sup> to the Company in their affairs and a similar dispute to the present one had passed away without any untoward consequences. But now there was a decided coolness

19. Long's Selections from Unpublished Records of Government, p. 19.

20. Bengal Consultations, 28th August, 1749.

between the Seths and the Company and though they took no active steps against the English in spite of the fact that the Armenians paid assiduous court to them yet they refused to speak to the Nawab on their behalf while the Nawab placed the whole management of the affair in the hands of two men named Hookembeg and Carooleybeg.<sup>21</sup> These were the "two favourites" whom the writer quoted above mistake for the Seths. These were the men who informed the Company's servants at Cassimbazar that nothing less than four lakhs would satisfy the Nawab "but", said the latter, "on giving Hookembeg and Carooleybeg to understand no great sum on so unjust a pretence would ever be complied with and standing it out with them they have reduced it to two laack which Hookembeg and Carooleybeg tell them the Nabob will certainly insist on. But notwithstanding this they still believe that by standing out longer it may in time be brought down to one laack besides twenty five or thirty thousand to Hookembeg, etc."<sup>22</sup>

Signs of the coolness between the Seths and the Company have already been noticed. Jagat Seth Mahtab Rai had complained about the sale of bullion in Calcutta and of the failure of the Company to pay the interest on the sums they had borrowed. In addition a long dispute was going on at Dacca arising from the fact that one of the Company's servants there had died owing the Seths a large sum of money and though the Company held themselves resolutely aloof from the matter officially still the fact remained that their servants were involved in the dispute. Further the Company was very greatly in debt to the Seths. In September, 1749 the debt of the Dacca factory to the Seths alone amounted to Rs. 584,000<sup>23</sup> and though we have not a record of the debt of the Cassimbazar factory for this year their account with the Seths in the year 1751 was Rs. 512,820<sup>24</sup> and was probably larger than this in 1749. The Seths considered that a large part of the bullion which arrived

21. Bengal Consultations, 28th August, 1749.

22. Bengal Consultations, 17th September, 1749.

23. Bengal Consultations, 18th September, 1749.

24. "Since transmitting the Seats' Account Current with the Hon'ble Company they have prevailed with them to give up the Compound Interest on their notes for Siccas 512820-13." Letter from Cassimbazar in Bengal Consultations, 18th November, 1751.



from Europe ought to have been applied to the reduction of these debts and were extremely discontented when this was not done. At the very outbreak of the Company's dispute with the Nawab their servants at Cassimbazar wrote: "The Seats are much disgusted at not receiving some of the money per "Bombay Castle" a great part whereof it seems they expected. They therefore presume a letter from the President to them with some excuses for what has happened and assurances given that they shall in some measure be satisfied by the next supply of money that arrives will they apprehend have a good effect and bring them into better humour." To this the Council replied:—"In regard to Futtichund we shall always be glad to serve him when in our power but as the sum that is now arrived is but very small we could not spare him anything from our investment that might be satisfactory and therefore hope he will not take amiss waiting a little longer as we expect a large supply very shortly."<sup>25</sup> The Company's servants at Cassimbazar reported that the Seths were not at all satisfied with the message they had received whereupon the Council directed to assure the Seths that "we shall do all we can to keep up a fair correspondence with them by doing all that is in our power to serve them."<sup>26</sup>

This was in January. At the end of February the English at Cassimbazar heard that a ship had arrived with silver and wrote to the Council to remind them "of what they before requested in regard to their merchants but more particularly to the Seats to make them easy for upon them only they depend to be extricated from their difficulties."<sup>27</sup> 17 chests of silver were sent to Cassimbazar to pay to Jagat Seth but when they applied to him for help in finishing their dispute with the Nawab all he would do was to advise them that the quickest and cheapest way of ending the business was to pay the Nawab a sum of money for if they satisfied him the Armenians would have to be satisfied also.<sup>28</sup> In August the English at Cassimbazar proposed to send a Mr. Kelsall to the Seths in order to induce them to speak to the Nawab in their behalf but the

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25. Bengal Consultations, 19th December, 1748.

26. Bengal Consultations, 3rd January, 1748-9.

27. Bengal Consultations, 25th February, 1748-9.

28. Bengal Consultations, 13th April, 1749.

Seths informed them they were disinclined to interfere in the matter or to admit of any visit till the dispute with the Durbar had been made up.<sup>29</sup> Thus it will be seen that the Seths practically held themselves entirely aloof from this quarrel between the English and the Nawab and they pursued this course until the dispute was settled in October by the Company promising to pay the Nawab Rs. 120,000. To pay this sum the Company were obliged to apply to the Seths.

"They had some days before," wrote the Company's servants at Cassimbazar on the 20th October, "directed the Vacqueels to wait on the Seats and sound them in regard to supplying them with what money they might want on this occasion but could never get a positive answer from them before the dispute with the Nawab was ended when they sent their vacqueels to them again to request they would advance the money. At first they made the greatest difficulty to comply with their request notwithstanding they assured them it should be paid out of the first money that came up. After representing to them strongly the ill consequences which would arise to the Company's affairs in case their business was not cleared immediately they (the Seths) sent Ruidass their gomastah there to talk with them further about it who complained heavily of our not having paid anything this season of the large debt the Company owed them at that factory notwithstanding so much treasure had been imported by the several ships lately arrived and then told them they could not let them have the money unless they would promise to pay them three laack of rupees as soon as their boats come up. They told Ruidass that they could not answer this without first writing to us about it but if the Seats would furnish them with the money they had then occasion for they would write to us to supply them with as much as ever we could spare which should be all paid to them but this being no way satisfactory he then demanded of them to give up a bill of exchange they had on his master's house for twenty three thousand sicca rupees, the four chests of bullion remaining in their treasury and to draw a bill on us for two laack of sicca rupees which they agreed to on his promising to advance one laack and fifty thousand sicca rupees directly."

It is curious to note that in the bill drawn by the Company's servants at Cassimbazar on the President and Council at Calcutta the name of Manik Chand turns up again in the name of the firm. "This morning," runs the record, "we received a letter from the Gentlemen at Cossimbazar dated the 17th Instant advising of their having drawn a Bill on us for two Laack of Sicca Rupees (Rs. 200,000) payable at sight to Biddass or order for value received of Seat Monickchund Seat Anunchund which they request us to honour.

The Seats' Gomastah now tendering the Bill of Exchange as advised of in the foregoing Letter.

Ordered the Committee of Treasury to pay off the same."<sup>30</sup>

During this year we come across, for the first time, the name of Jagat Seth Mahtab Rai's eldest son—Kushal Chand—who seems to have entered the firm at this time. On the 15th June, 1740, the merchants at Dacca wrote: "We have made the Seats' Gomastah easy for the present but with a promise of payment of their note to Seat Mowtabray Bauboo Coosalchand for fifty four thousand sicca rupees as soon as the expected shipping arrive and a currency is given to our business."<sup>31</sup>

We read of many more transactions between the Company and the Seats during the remaining years of the Government of Alivardi Khan but, with one exception, they may be passed over in silence. On the 9th January, 1750 the Company's servants at Cassimbazar forwarded to Calcutta a copy of an order which "their vacqueels inform them the Seats have lately obtained from the Nabob which forbids all persons besides themselves from purchasing any silver or taking any Arcot rupees."<sup>32</sup>

Alivardi Khan enjoyed five years of peace after his treaty with the Mahrattas and died in his 80th year on the 9th April, 1756.

## 2.

The author of the *Seir Mutaqherin*, writing at a time when the son of Mir Jafar possessed but a shadow of the authority of former Nawabs, declared that men would hardly be able

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30. Bengal Consultations, 21st October, 1749.

31. Bengal Consultations, 26th June, 1749.

32. Bengal Consultations, 11th January, 1749-50

to believe the credit and authority enjoyed by Mahtab Rai and Swarup Chand in Bengal during the time of Alivardi Khan. M. Law, the chief of the French factory at Cassimbazar, mentions the great respect with which they were treated by the Nawab. Like Fateh Chand they had great influence at Delhi. Their reputation in that city was so great that when the inhabitants heard of the revolution of 1757 which overthrew Siraj-ud-daula and placed Mir Jafar on the throne, they ascribed it entirely to the Seths and Rai Durlabh Ram while Clive, whose name was well-known to them was a great captain whom the Seths had brought from very far at great expense to deliver Bengal from the tyranny of Siraj-ud-daula.<sup>33</sup> If the wealth of Fateh Chand impressed the people of Bengal the wealth of the two cousins dazzled them. It was impossible to mention it "without seeming to exaggerate and to deal in extravagant fables."<sup>34</sup> The populace, to whom krors of rupees conveyed but a vague meaning, estimated the wealth of the Seths by saying that they could, if they chose, have blocked up the head of the Bhagirathi at Suti with rupees. 4,000 persons of all sorts, lived in their palaces. "All the bankers of their time in Bengal were either their factors or some of their family" and thousands of these agents acquired such fortunes in their service that they were able to purchase large tracts of lands and other possessions.<sup>35</sup>

One great source of profit to the Seths was the receipt of the revenue of Bengal and other payments made to the Nawab. It appears that they were entitled to receive ten per cent.<sup>36</sup> on all these payments and Scrafton estimated their profits from this source at 40 lakhs a year.

But there was a practice, peculiar to Bengal, which though a grievance to the inhabitants in general, must have proved a perennial stream of wealth to the Seths. Mr. Batson describes the practice in 1760, when Mir Kasim was Nawab. "The Nawab receives his revenues in siccas of the current year only, which are accordingly esteemed the only authorised coin, that is to say, the only coin a person is obliged to receive in pay-

33. Hill's *Three Frenchmen in Bengal*, p. 118.

34. *Seir Mutaqherin*, Vol. II, p. 227.

35. *Seir Mutaqherin*, Vol. II, p. 227.

36. Hill's *Bengal in 1756-57*, Vol. II, p. 278.

ment ; and all siccas of a lower date being esteemed, like the coin of foreign provinces, only a merchandise, are bought and sold at a certain discount called the *batta*, which rises and falls like the price of other goods in the market. This undervaluation of all siccas of a lower date than the current year being established, the farmer of the Nabob's Mint and the Shroffs connected with him use various artifices to maintain it, that they may have an opportunity of buying up such undervalued rupees which they carry into the Mint and stamp anew ; hence arises their profit, which enables them to give a yearly sum to the Nabob for the farm." Mr. Batson estimated that the charge of stamping the rupees afresh would be, if properly managed, not more than  $\frac{1}{2}$  per cent. and considerably less if a large quantity of rupees were sent to the Mint. "By the Shroffs connected with the farmers of the Mint," Mr. Batson meant "Juggut Seat's house, who have the privilege of coining and now stamping their money in the Nabob's Mint on paying to the farmer as I understand a duty of  $\frac{1}{2}$  per cent., by this privilege and by their great wealth and influence in the country they reap the chief benefit arising from the above-mentioned practice, which I have called an indirect tax, and the Nabob finds it convenient to indulge them therein in recompense for the loans and exactions he obliges them to pay in his exigencies of money."<sup>37</sup>

As their connection with the Mint at Murshidabad was so profitable to them they were naturally hostile to the establishment of a Mint at Calcutta which might possibly have diminished their profits. How hopeless it was, in the time of Alivardi Khan for the English to establish a Mint against the wishes of the Seths can be seen from the following letter, dated the 8th February, 1753, to Roger Drake, the President of the Council at Calcutta.

"Hon'ble Sir,—As the directions to the Hon'ble the President and Council from the Hon'ble the Court of Directors for the establishment of a mint in Calcutta require the utmost secrecy, I have been obliged to use the greatest caution in the affair, but by all the distant enquiries I could make it would

37. Long's Selections from Unpublished Records of Government, p. 216.

be impracticable to effect it with the Nabob, as an attempt of that kind would be immediately overset by Juggut Set even at the expense of a much larger sum than what our Hon'ble Masters allow us to pay ; he being the sole purchaser of all the Bullion that is imported in this province by which he is annually a very considerable gainer.

However, that no means might be left unessayed to get so beneficial a privilege for our Hon'ble Master, I have at last ventured to entrust and consult our vaqueel, who is of the same opinion that it is impossible to effect it here, but said his Master Hackem Beg had a son in great power at Delhie, who might be able to get us a Phirmaund from the King ; but that this would be attended at least with the expense of one hundred thousand Rupees, and that on the arrival of the Phirmaund here it would cost another hundred thousand Rupees to the Mutsuddys and Dewans of the Nabob to put that Phirmaund in force, and that this affair must be carried on with the greatest secrecy, that Juggut Set's house might not have the least intimation of it, but I much question whether we could get the mint for any sum with so extensive a privilege as our Hon'ble Masters want.

I am, etc.,

(Sd.) WILLIAM WATTE.<sup>38</sup>

An article in the treaty made with Siraj-ud-daula in February 1757, gave the Company the right to establish their mint at Calcutta and this right was confirmed by Mir Jafar. At first, however, the Company found great difficulty in persuading people to accept the Calcutta rupees in payment. In January 1758, a European merchant, to whom the Company had to pay 11 lacs of rupees, absolutely refused to take the Calcutta money and when the public notary was sent to protest against his conduct, he refused to admit him and the protest had to be nailed to his door. His excuse was that by accepting the Company's rupees his fortune was daily exposed to being curtailed from 5½ to 10 per cent, at the pleasure of Jagat Seth "who," he said, "has the sole management and direction of

38. Long's Selections from Unpublished Records of Government, p. 47.

the current money of the country, and can always make it fluctuate in such a manner as he sees fitting and convenient for his purpose." When the Court of Directors heard of the merchant's conduct they ordered him to quit India within a year, "his behaviour appearing to be insolent as well as frivolous and tending to set an example of obstinacy and opposition."<sup>39</sup> But the military could not be dealt with in that manner and when they remonstrated on the same ground as the merchant, the Company had to yield. Nearly two years later, on the 29th December, 1759, we find the President and Council complaining to the Court of Directors that "our Mint is at present of very little use to us, as there has been no bullion sent out of Europe this season or two past, and we are apprehensive that it will never be attended with all the advantages we might have expected from it, as the coining of Siccas in Calcutta interferes so much with the interest of the Seths that they will not fail of throwing every obstacle in our way to depreciate the value of our money in the country, notwithstanding its weight and standard is in every respect as good as the Siccas of Moorshedabad; so that a loss of batta will always arise on our money, let our influence at the Durbar be ever so great."<sup>40</sup> At length, in November, 1760, the Company obtained from Mir Kasim, whom they had just made Nawab, a parwana ordering their rupees to pass current and forbidding any person to demand a discount upon them.<sup>41</sup>

Another source of profit to the Seths was their transactions with the European merchants in Bengal. The English, French and Dutch all had dealings with them and these were on a large scale. We read of the Dutch borrowing Rs. 400,000 at the ordinary interest of  $\frac{3}{4}$  per cent. a month or 9 per cent. a year.<sup>42</sup> The French were heavily in debt to the Seths before the capture of Chandernagore by Clive in 1757. Orme says that their debt amounted to a million and a half of rupees.

39. Long's Selections from Unpublished Records of Government, p. 138.

40. Long's Selections from Unpublished Records of Government, p. 164.

41. Long's Selections from Unpublished Records of Government, p. 227.

42. Hill's Bengal in 1756-57, Vol. i, p. 32.

Some idea of the transactions of the English with Mahtab Rai and Swarup Chand has already been given while their successors sent in a claim to the English for between 50 and 60 lakhs of rupees. The inhabitants of Bengal firmly believe to this day that the Seths advanced large sums of money to the English prior to the battle of Plassey and that "the rupees of the Hindu banker, equally with the sword of the English Colonel contributed to the overthrow of the Muhammadan power in Bengal."<sup>43</sup>

The events which led to the overthrow of the Muhammadan power and the foundation of British domination in Bengal brought the Seths into close connection with the English. They were almost alone in their endeavours to dissuade Siraj-ud-daula from making his reckless march on Calcutta, they befriended the fugitives at Fulta, they earned the thanks of Clive for negotiating the treaty between Siraj-ud-daula and the English which left the latter free to deal with the French. M. Law, the Chief of the French factory at Cassimbazar, speaking with firsthand knowledge and from a bitter personal experience, affirmed that Jagat Seth Mahtab Rai and Maharaja Swarup Chand were the originators of the revolution that overthrew Siraj-ud-daula and that without their aid the English could never have accomplished what they did. Unlike others they never played the part of traitors to the English nor, like others, do they appear to have stipulated for a pecuniary return for their services. After the death of Siraj-ud-daula they averted combination of Hindu rajas of Behar who would have risen to establish a Hindu government.<sup>44</sup> Throughout the government of Mir Jafar and his successor Mir Kasim they steadily adhered to the English cause and their friendship for the English was the crime for which they were put to death by Mir Kasim. These events will form the subject of the following pages.

### 3.

One of Siraj-ud-daula's relations, Ghulam Husain Khan, the author of the *Seir Mutaqherin*, reflecting on the incredible

43. Hunter's *Statistical Account of Bengal*, Vol. ix, p. 258.

44. Hill's *Three Frenchmen in Bengal*, p. 120.



recklessness, folly, and wickedness of that Nawab, saw in his elevation to the government of Bengal, Behar and Orissa a manifestation of the workings of an avenging Providence, who had minutely recorded all the excesses and crimes of Alivardi Khan and his family and had decreed that this guilty race should be deprived of an empire that had cost so much toil in raising. Siraj-ud-daula's mother, Amina Begam, was a daughter of Alivardi Khan. Zainuddin Ahmad, his father, was a son of Haji Ahmad, Alivardi Khan's brother. He was assassinated at Patna in 1748 by Pathans who had revolted against Alivardi Khan. Siraj-ud-daula's birth is said to have taken place at the time when Shuja-ud-daula chose Alivardi Khan to be Governor of Behar and the latter, struck by the coincidence and attributing his good fortune to the event, adopted him as his heir. Alivardi Khan's love for his grandson was like that of Jacob for Benjamin but it was as ill-directed and as fatal as that of Eli "whose sons made themselves vile and he restrained them not." Siraj-ud-daula was trained to expect the gratification of every wish, indulgence in every whim and unfortunately, when he grew up, the whole bent of his mind was towards evil. Gathering around him a band of followers like himself "he commenced a course of insolencies, infamies and profligacies ; and either out of that ignorance, incidental to that age, or because of an ardour natural to his constitution, (although really it was because of his perfect reliance on his uncle's forbearance) such a course of life became in him his real character. This is so far true, that he was observed to be low spirited and melancholy, whenever he fell short of opportunities to commit his usual excesses and enormities ; and they became so customary to him, that he acted all along without a grain of remorse, or a spark of recollection. Making no distinction betwixt vice and virtue, and paying no regard to the nearest relations, he carried defilement wherever he went ; and like a man alienated in his mind he made the houses of men and women of distinction the scene of his profligacy, without minding either rank or station. In a little time he became as detested as Pharaoh : people on meeting him by chance used to say God save us from him."<sup>45</sup>

45. *Seir Mutaqherin*, Vol. I, p. 645.

The Europeans in Bengal thought it impossible that such a man would ever become ruler of the three provinces but Siraj-ud-daula was marvellously favoured by fortune. His two uncles, Nawazish Muhammad, Governor of Dacca, and Sayyid Ahmad, Governor of Purnea, who might have proved formidable rivals, both died a few months before Alivardi Khan. Besides many people thought that Siraj-ud-daula would become more humane when he was Nawab and were encouraged in this belief by the example of his uncle Nawazish Muhammad, who had been quite as vicious as Siraj-ud-daula in his youth and had grown up to be the idol of the people of the province. The influence of Alivardi Khan, too, counted for much and this influence, combined with a judicious distribution of gifts of money, was exerted on Siraj-ud-daula's behalf so that, contrary to all expectations Siraj-ud-daula quietly succeeded his grandfather when the latter died on April 9th 1756.<sup>46</sup> The hope that the possession of power would work a change in the character of Siraj-ud-daula was doomed to disappointment. The first act of his government was to despoil his aunt, Ghasita Begam, who had retired to Moti Jhil with the vast treasures left by her husband, Nawazish Muhammad. She was suspected of attempting to set up the infant son of Siraj-ud-daula's younger brother as Nawab. Great changes at Court followed. The old officers of Alivardi Khan were dismissed and their places given to worthless favourites. Mir Jafar, who for years had been paymaster of the forces, had to give place to a Hindu, Mir Madan. Another Hindu, Mohan Lal, "the greatest scoundrel the earth has ever borne, worthy Minister of such a master"<sup>47</sup> was made Diwan. This man who became the chief adviser of Siraj-ud-daula, was the "sworn enemy of the Seths." Jagat Seth Mahtab Rai and his cousin soon found that they were no longer treated with the great respect they had received from former Nawabs. "Siraj-ud-daula, the most inconsiderate of men, thinking it impossible that he could have need of these saukars<sup>48</sup> or that he could have any reason to fear them, never showed them

46. Law's Memoir in Hill's Bengal in 1756-57, Vol. III, pp. 162-164.

47. M. Law in Hill's Bengal in 1756-57, Vol. III, p. 190.

48. Bankers.

the least politeness. 'Their wealth was his aim ; sooner or later he would seize it.' In less than a year Siraj-ud-daula found reason to alter his attitude to the Seths but it was then too late even if he had been sincere.

Before Siraj-ud-daula had been Nawab a month he had alienated not only the Seths but also most of the chief men at his court.<sup>49</sup> They detested his character, they dreaded his violence and they could not bear the arrogance of his Hindu favourites who had been placed over them. Soon the principal men in the city "were only intent on finding out the means of overturning his power, whether by art, by force, or by treason."<sup>50</sup> Their time was to come but not immediately. The astonishing success of Siraj-ud-daula, first against the English and then against his cousin and rival, Shaukat Jung, the Governor of Purnea, caused him to be feared as much as he was detested. Men said that his star was predominant and nothing could resist him. None believed this more firmly than he himself.

We would naturally suppose that when Siraj-ud-daula made war on the English he had some great grievance against them or at least some clear motive for attacking them which everyone would have recognised at once as the fundamental cause of the war, but when we seek for this unmistakable cause we are baffled. We can read what the Nawab said, what the English said, and what the world said, but the Nawab may have been concealing his true motives, the English could not agree and the world repeated what it heard from one of the former sources.

The Nawab gave his pretexts for the war in letters to the Armenian, Coja Wajid, and Mr. Pigot the Governor of Madras. To the former he wrote:—"I have three substantial motives for extirpating the English out of my country, one that they have built strong fortifications and dug large ditch in the King's dominions contrary to the established laws of the country ; The second is that they have abused the privilege of their dustucks by granting them to such as were no ways entitled to them, from which practices the King has

49. M. Law. Hill's Bengal in 1756-57, Vol. III, p. 175.

50. Seir Mutaqherin, Vol. I, p. 718.

suffered greatly in the revenues of his Customs ; The third motive is that they give protection to such of the King's subjects as have by their behaviour in the employs they were entrusted with made themselves liable to be called to an account and instead of giving them up on demand they allow such persons to shelter themselves within their bounds from the hands of justice."<sup>51</sup> To Mr. Pigot he wrote :—"It was not my intention to remove the mercantile business of the Company belonging to you from out of the subah of Bengal, but Roger Drake your gomasta was a very wicked and unruly man and began to give protection to person who had accounts with the Patcha<sup>52</sup> in his koatey.<sup>53</sup> Notwithstanding all my admonitions, yet he did not desist from his shameless actions."<sup>54</sup>

Mr. Becher and the Council at Dacca stoutly maintained that the protection given by the Company to Krishna Das was the cause of the war. Governor Drake and Mr. Holwell maintained as stoutly that it had nothing to do with it. Mr. William Tooke thought that the whole affair was a trap set by the Nawab to catch the English. Mr. Manningham declared that it was impossible to give any rational account of the origin of the troubles. When he was at Murshidabad with Lord Clive a careful enquiry was made into the motives of Siraj-ud-daula's conduct. His principal officers, the Seths and every other person from whom information was likely to be obtained were questioned without success. Mr. Scrafton, too, declared the source of Siraj-ud-daula's resentment against the English to be "one of those state mysteries that die with their authors" and adds "I have made it my study since our intercourse with the great men at court, to penetrate into the cause of this event but could never obtain anything satisfactory. . . Perhaps it is a vain research to trace the motives of a capricious tyrant." On the other hand Mr. Becher said that Manik Chand and Jagat Seth in letters to Major Killpatrick asserted that the Nawab's anger against the English began on their protecting his subjects. These letters have been lost.<sup>55</sup>

51. Hill's Bengal in 1756-57.

52. Padshah, emperor.

53. House, factory.

54. Hill's Bengal in 1756-57.

55. Letter from Council, Dacca, to Court of Directors (Hill, Vol.

As a matter of fact Siraj-ud-daula's anger against the English arose before he became Nawab. Like many others the English thought that a man hated as he was, would never become Nawab. According to M. Law "they never addressed themselves to Siraj-ud-daula for their business in the Durbar, but on the contrary avoided all communication with him. On certain occasions they refused him admission into their factory at Cossimbazar, and their country houses, because, in fact this excessively blustering and impertinent young man used to break the furniture or, if it pleased him, take it away. But Siraj-ud-daula was not the man to forget what he regarded as an insult."<sup>56</sup> In addition Siraj-ud-daula firmly believed that the English were plotting with Ghasita Begam. He brought this charge against them fifteen days before the death of Alivardi Khan in the presence of Dr. William Forth, the surgeon of Cassimbazar and when Alivardi Khan, after enquiry, declared that he did not believe a word of what had been told him Siraj-ud-daula answered that he could prove it.<sup>57</sup> Alivardi Khan had observed with concern how prone Siraj-ud-daula was to quarrel with the English and this was one of the reasons which led him to say that after his death "the hat-men would possess themselves of all the shores of India."<sup>58</sup>

The facts about Krishna Das are these. Raj Ballabh, his father, who had been diwan of Nawazish Muhammad at Dacca, either fearing for the safety of his property or joining in a plot to entrap the English, informed Mr. Watts, the chief of the factory at Cassimbazar, that his son was going on a pilgrimage to Jagannath but as his son's wife was expecting to give birth to a child he requested Mr. Watts to obtain admission for his son into Calcutta until the latter's wife could proceed

I, p. 67) and to Council Fort St. George (Hill, Vol. I, p. 95). Letter from the Richard Becher to Council Fort William (Hill, Vol. II, p. 157). Holwell to Court of Directors (Hill, Vol. II, p. 7). Drake to Council, Fort William (Hill, Vol. II, p. 139, 146). Drake's Narrative (Hill, Vol. I, p. 122). William Tooke's Narrative (Hill, Vol. I, pp. 279, 280, 285). Manningham's Evidence (Hill, Vol. III, P. 284). Becher to Council, Fort William (Hill, Vol. II, p. 160). Scrafton, *Reflections on the Government, etc. of Indostan* (1763), p. 55.

56. Law's Memoir (Hill, Vol. III, p. 162).

57. Dr. Wm. Forth to Drake at Fulta (Hill, Vol. II, p. 65).

58. *Seir Mutaqherin*, Vol. I, p. 690.

on her journey. This was done and Krishna Das arrived in Calcutta about the 16th March, 1756. Alivardi Khan died on the 9th April. About the 15th April Narayan Singh, a spy came to Calcutta privately and in disguise, with a letter from the Nawab to the Governor demanding the surrender of Krishna Dass, his family and wealth. The Governor refused to receive a messenger coming in such a manner and turned him out of the place with disgrace. Thinking, however, that trouble might ensue he sent word of what had been done to Mr. Watts at Cassimbazar. Mr. Watts immediately wrote to some of the chief officers at the Durbar to prevent any complaint being made to the Nawab and the affair was seemingly hushed up.<sup>59</sup>

The final rupture between the Nawab and the English came about in the following manner. The Nawab's spies informed him that the English and French were fortifying their settlements of Calcutta and Chandernagore. As far as the English were concerned there was some truth in their report. As war with the French was imminent they had repaired their line of guns on the riverside, built a small redoubt at Perrin's garden on the northern boundary of the settlement and cleared out the Mahratta ditch. An octagon summer house built in the garden of a Mr. Kelsall was also reported to be a fortification. The Nawab sent a letter to the Governor ordering him to desist from carrying on any new works, to demolish the redoubt and draw-bridge at Perrin's and to fill up the ditch and immediately left Mushidabad to march against Shaukat Jung. The order arrived in Calcutta about the 10th or 12th May and Drake, without consulting his Council, at once sent a reply to Watts at Cassimbazar who was to forward it to the Nawab. Upon its arrival the vakil explained it to Watts who thought it a very proper answer and sent it on to the Nawab who was at Rajmahal. As soon as Siraj-ud-daula read the letter he became furiously angry, ordered troops to be sent against the factory at Cassimbazar and followed himself with

59. Watts & Collett to Court of Directors (Hill, Vol. I, p. 100). Drake's Narrative (Hill, Vol. I, p. 120). Holwell to Court of Directors (Hill, Vol. II, p. 6), etc.

his whole army. The factory at Cassimbazar was taken on the 2nd June.<sup>60</sup>

Drake's letter has been lost but he says that *the substance of it was as follows*:—"That it gave us concern to observe follows:—"That it gave us concern to observe that some enemies had advised His Excellency without regard to truth that we were erecting new fortifications; That for this century past we had traded in his dominions and had been protected and encouraged by the several Subahs, always having paid a due obedience to their orders, That we hoped he would not listen to any false representations, and that we depended on his favour to protect our commerce which tended to the benefit of his provinces, as we exported the produce of the ground in return for bullion brought into the country; That he must have been acquainted to the great loss our Company sustained by the capture of Madrass by the French; That there was now an appearance of another war breaking out between the French nation and ours, wherefore we were repairing our walls which were in danger of being carried away by the river and were not otherwise erecting any new works or digging any ditch."<sup>61</sup> The only explanation of the Nawab's anger is that he resented the hint that the war between the English and French would probably be brought into Bengal and regarded as an insult the insinuation that he was powerless to protect the English. Watts, however, thought that Narayan Singh might have taken this opportunity to complain to the Nawab of the treatment he had received at Calcutta.<sup>62</sup>

Whether it would have been possible to turn the Nawab from his purpose is doubtful. Messrs. Watts and Collett maintained that it would have been possible and that even when the Nawab had advanced as far as Hughli he could have been propitiated with a sum of money.<sup>63</sup> Omar Beg, one of the Nawab's officers, thought even up to the last that the Nawab merely intended to frighten the English and that all would be

60. Watts to Council Fort William (Hill, I, 8). Drake's Narrative (Hill I, 23). Tooke's Narrative (Hill I, 283). Holwell to Court of Directors (Hill II 8). Declaration by Francis Sykes (Hill I 163).

61. Drake's Narrative (Hill I 124).

62. Watts to Court of Directors (Hill III, 322).

63. Watts and Collet to Council, Fort St. George (Hill I 58).

put right at Calcutta.<sup>64</sup> According to the *Seir Mutaqherin* Siraj-ud-daula treated his officers so badly that they were quite indifferent as to what might happen. Otherwise "this dispute might have been terminated by a few words in a conference, by the least of his ministers and commanders, without it becoming necessary to recur to force and to war."

On the other hand it is recorded that Siraj-ud-daula's mother, Amina Begam, tried in vain to dissuade him from marching against Calcutta. Jagat Seth Mahtab Rai and his cousin also visited Siraj-ud-daula who had taken up his quarters at the house of Mr. Collett, the second at Cassimbazar. They represented to him that the English were a colony of inoffensive and useful merchants and earnestly entreated the Nawab to moderate his resentment against them.<sup>65</sup> Siraj-ud-daula in reply referred to the many insults he had received at the hands of the English, they had detained his subjects who had wronged him and fled to them for protection and he went on to say—"I have never forgot the behaviour of one of the Chiefs here. When I came one day to their factory with my mother I sent to let them know that we wanted to come in and see it. He refused it. This has stuck by me ever since."<sup>66</sup> The remonstrances of Jagat Seth were in vain "and that none might presume to divert him from his resolution, he exacted an oath from Jagutseat (who had always acted as mediator between the government and the Europeans) not to interfere or offer any argument to make him alter his mind. After this, no one dared to plead for the unfortunate English."<sup>67</sup>

On the 9th June, Siraj-ud-daula left Cassimbazar. He arrived before Calcutta on the 16th and on the 20th the place was in his hands. Those of the defenders who escaped death either made their way to the French and Dutch settlements or took refuge with the women and children on the ships which dropped down the river to Fulta. There they anchored. Those fugitives from Calcutta who had reached Chandernagore or Hugli began to make their way to Fulta and were followed by refugees from Luckeypore, Balasore and Dacca. For nearly six months a

64. Dr. Forth to Drake (Hill II 60).

65. Orme, Vol. II, p. 58.

66. Dr. Forth to Drake (Hill II, 62).

67. Sraffton, *Reflections*, p. 57.



few ships and a dwindling band of men, women and children, almost destitute of the necessities of life, and stricken with fever, were all that remained of the flourishing settlements of the English in Bengal. Appeals to the French and Dutch for succour were unheeded for the Nawab had threatened those nations with destruction if they assisted the refugees with provisions and at first they had to rely for good on friendly inhabitants of the district who stealthily came to the ships at night. "It was a most melancholy sight", says one of the band, "to see such a number of men, women and children, without a change of clothes, victuals or drink, and many obliged to be exposed to the inclemency of the weather day and night, the shipping was so much crowded."<sup>68</sup> The Governor fared no better than the rest—"no shift of linen for eight days until relieved by one of the pilots, and the deck was my bed, the comins of a hatchway my pillow, my sustenance rice half mixed with paddy, slain starved animals that hunger reduced me to eat, muddy river water for my drink."<sup>69</sup>

At the end of July Major Killpatrick arrived from Madras with about 220 men. By this time the refugees were somewhat better off with regard to provisions but on the other hand the place was becoming more and more unhealthy as the rainy season advanced. Swamps and paddy lined the banks of the river and rendered it impossible to live on shore. The men suffered more than the women. All through the rains they died daily and Major Killpatrick's detachment was almost exterminated.<sup>70</sup>

Nothing could be attempted except negotiations. On the 15th August Major Killpatrick wrote a complimentary letter to the Nawab "complaining a little of the hard usage of the English Honourable Company, assuring him of his good intentions notwithstanding what had happened and begging in the meantime, till things were cleared up, that he would treat him at least as a friend and give orders that our people may be supplied with provisions in a full and friendly manner."<sup>71</sup> On

68. William Tooke's Narrative (Hill I, 297).

69. Drake to Council, Fort William (Hill II, p. 144).

70. Major Killpatrick to Council, Fort St. George (Hill I, p. 192). Wm. Tooke's Narrative (Hill I, p. 300). Hill Vol. III, p. 87.

71. Select Committee Proceedings at Fulta (Hill I, 204).

the 22nd Omichand sent Coja Petrus and Abraham Jacobs to the Major with a letter recommending him to write to Jagat Seth and others. The Major did so but Omichand "did not think it right" to forward the letters and returned them. Warren Hastings, who had remained at Cassimbazar, also thought it unnecessary to forward Major Killpatrick's letter to the Nawab. At this time there were great hopes that Shaukat Jung, the Governor of Purnea, would defeat Siraj-ud-daula and some of the principal men of Murshidabad were in correspondence with him. In any case it was an inopportune time for negotiations as the Consultations of the Secret Committee at Fulta, dated the 5th September, will show :—"Yesterday came advices from Mr. Forth of the 2nd instant that by letters from Mr. Bisdorn from Cossimbazar, of the 31st ultimo, the contents of which Mr. Bisdorn desired him to communicate, he is informed that the Nabob of Purnea was appointed by the King Nabob of Bengal ; that he was joined by another considerable Raja, and that he had begun hostilities and taken about 200 boats ; that upon news of this Surajed Dowla had ordered Jaffar Alli Cawn and other principal officers to march with a force to oppose him, which they did, but returned on the 29th on account of a dispute between the Nabob and Juggerseat, in which the former reproached the latter for not getting a phirmaund and then ordered him to raise from the merchants three crore of rupees, but Juggesseat pleading the hardships of his already oppressed people received a blow on the face and was confined. Jaffar Alli Cawn returning upon this went with other principal officers and insisted on Juggerseat being set at liberty, but were refused, on which they declared that they would not draw their swords in his service till he should be appointed Nabob by the King."<sup>72</sup>

Subsequently the correspondence was resumed apparently without the intervention of Omichand for Coja Petrus delivered the letters to the agents of Jagat Seth and Coja Wazid at Hugli. He returned with satisfactory answers to Major Killpatrick. Until the arrival of Admiral Watson and Clive the English were freed from all fear of hostility or molestation from the

72. Consultations of Secret Committee at Fulta (Long's Unpublished Records 75, 76, 77).

Nawab's troops at Calcutta.<sup>73</sup> The English at Fulta seem to have been dissatisfied with the efforts made by Coja Wazid on their behalf for on the 23rd November the Council directed Major Killpatrick to write to Jagat Seth assuring him "that their dependence was upon him and upon him alone, for the hopes they had of resettling in an amicable manner."<sup>74</sup>

In truth there was never any hope of resettling at Calcutta except on such terms as (Mr. Watts hoped) Englishmen would never consent to.<sup>75</sup> Siraj-ud-daula had defeated Shaukat Jung and his belief in his star was at its highest pitch. The English were never mentioned at the Court of Murshidabad but with pity or contempt.<sup>76</sup> "A pair of slippers," said Siraj-ud-daula, "is all that is needed to govern them." He thought that their whole number in all Europe could not exceed ten or twelve thousand men and never imagined they would entertain the idea of re-establishing themselves by force. He expected them to come to him with a sum of money in one hand and the other held out to receive thankfully whatever he was pleased to give them.<sup>77</sup> The English, on the other hand, recognised that the immediate possession of Calcutta was useless to them for it was neither advisable nor safe to trust any of the Company's property there until they had a force sufficient to defend it against the Nawab. Accordingly Major Killpatrick acknowledged that the negotiations had answered almost all their intentions. They gained time and were supplied with provisions while they were obliged to remain inactive.<sup>78</sup> The correspondence went on until the arrival of the King's ships. On the 11th December Dr. William Forth at Chinsura informed the Council at Fulta that Jagat Seth and Omichand were still endeavouring to make up matters and at the same time he acknowledged the receipt of a letter from the Secretary of the Council with which were enclosed two letters for Jagat Seth.<sup>79</sup> Four days later,

73. Petrus to Court of Directors (Hill III, 365).

74. Consultations at Fulta (Long's Unpublished Records, p. 81).

75. Watts and Collett to Council at Fulta (Hill I, p. 61).

76. Warren Hastings to Council at Fulta (Long's Unpublished Records, p. 78).

77. Law's Memoir (Hill III, 176).

78. Major Killpatrick to Court of Directors (Hill II, 164).

79. Hill Vol. II 54.

Admiral Watson and Clive arrived at Fulta and the negotiations were interrupted for a time.

But not for long. The Council of Fort St. George clearly defined the aim of the expedition which they despatched to Bengal under Clive and Watson. "We could not have resolved to engage our Honourable Masters in the vast expense of fitting out this armament," they said, "but with the hopes of obtaining equivalent advantages. The mere retaking of Calcutta should we think by no means be the end of this undertaking ; not only their Settlements and factories should be restored but all their privileges established in the full extent granted by the Great Mogul, and ample reparation made to them for the loss they have lately sustained ; otherwise we are of opinion it would have been better nothing had been attempted, than to have added the heavy charge of this armament to their former loss, without securing their colonies and trade from future insults and exactions.

"Should the Nabob on the news of the arrival of these forces, make offers tending to the acquiring to the Company the before-mentioned advantages, rather than risque the success of a war, we think that sentiments of revenging injuries, although they were never more just, should give place to the necessity of sparing as far as possible the many bad consequences of war besides the expense of the Company's treasures, but we are of opinion that the sword should go in hand with the pen, and that on the arrival of the present armament, hostilities should immediately commence with the utmost vigour. These hostilities must be of every kind which can either distress his dominions and estate or being reprizals into our possession. We have directed Colonel Clive to apply to you, gentlemen, for a plan of such a treaty as you would recommend to be made with the Nabob."<sup>80</sup>

The sword and the pen were to go hand in hand but the power of the sword had to be displayed first, for the Nawab returned no answer when Clive, on behalf of the Company, and Watson, in the name of the King, demanded the restoration of Calcutta and satisfaction for all the losses the Company had

80. Select Committee Fort St. George to Select Committee, Fort William (Hill I, 239).

sustained. On the 29th December Manik Chand, the Governor of Calcutta, was defeated in a skirmish at Budge Budge and fled with a bullet hole through his turban. On the 2<sup>nd</sup> January, 1757 Calcutta was recaptured and its defenders fled. Some of them did not stop till they reached Murshidabad where Manik Chand assured the Nawab that the English who had just come were a very different kind of men from those whom he had beaten at Calcutta a few months before.<sup>81</sup> On the 10th Hugli was captured and destroyed to strike terror into the Nawab's troops and to encourage malcontents to side with the English.

The pen, meanwhile, had not been idle. Probably before the capture of Hugli Clive had written to Jagat Seth and Coja Wazid—to the former as one who had served the English well at Fulta, to the latter because he was reputed to be the confidential agent of the Nawab in his dealings with Europeans. These letters have not been preserved but we have Jagat Seth's reply. It is dated the 14th January, 1757, and runs thus:—

“Your favour I have with great pleasure received and give due attention to the contents. You are pleased to say that the Nabob listens to what I may recommend, and hope I will exert myself for your good and the general benefit of the country. My business is that of a merchant, and probably what I may recommend that way he may give ear to. You have acted the very reverse part, and possessed yourselves of Calcutta by force, after which you have taken and destroyed the city of Hughley, and by all appearances you seem to have no design but that of fighting. In what manner then can I introduce an application for accommodating matters between the Nabob and you? What your intentions are it is impossible to find out by these acts of hostility. Put a stop to this conduct and let me know what your demands are. You may then depend upon it I will use my interest with the Nabob to finish these troubles. How can you expect that the Nabob will pass by or overlook your conduct in pretending to take up arms against the Prince or Subah of the country? Weigh this within yourself.”<sup>82</sup>

Coja Wajid replied on the 17th January, to the effect that out of a particular regard for the English Company he had

<sup>81</sup>. Law's Memior (Hill III, 179).

<sup>82</sup>. Hill, Vol. II, 104.

desired M. Renault, the Governor of Chandernagore, to accommodate matters between the Nawab and the English.<sup>83</sup> It was thought that these letters were written by the Nawab's order. They were sent to the Governor of Chandernagore who despatched two of his Council with them and at the same time offered his mediation.<sup>84</sup>

On the 21st January Clive replied to both letters. To Jagat Seth Mahtab Rai and Maharaja Swarup Chand he wrote as follows :—

“I have received the letter which you did me the honour to write and have communicated the contents to the Governor and Council of Calcutta.

It is with great pleasure I find you so ready to make use of your interest with the Nawab to come into terms of accommodation, and to settle the troubles of this country. It would be but repeating to you what you have heard from all mouths, the devastation and ruin committed by Seraja Dowla on the English. It would be unfolding a tale too horrible to repeat if I was to relate to you the horrid cruelties and barbarities inflicted upon an unfortunate people to whom the Nabob in a great part owes the riches and grandeur of his province. No less than 120 people, the greatest part of them gentlemen of family and distinction, being put to an ignominious death in one night and in such a manner as was quite inconsistent with the character of a man of courage or humanity, such I have always heard the Nabob represented to be, and for this reason I believe it must have been done without his knowledge. Under these circumstances how can you expect we should any longer defer our resentment? Did we not send many letters to the Nabob in expectation that he would have sent answers thereto and complied with our just demands? Did we not wait many days at Fulta without committing any hostilities? Did not the Governor of Budgbudge first declare war against the English by firing on the King's ships? What could we do but resent such treatment! Notwithstanding these just reasons of complaint you will find us ready to conclude such a Peace as I think both for the interest of the Nabob and of the Company, to which

83. Hill, Vol. II, 110.

84. Clive to Select Committee, Port St. George, (Hill II, 175)

purpose I sent you enclosed the proposals on which we are willing to treat. As you are a man of sense, you will easily see the justice of our demands, and use your interest with the Nabob to induce him to comply with them. In so doing you will get the name of a patriot and prevent the country from being made a scene of ruin and destruction. You should consider that the English are a great nation, and that a King reigns over them not inferior in power to the Padsha himself. What resentment will not His Imperial Majesty express when he comes to hear of the death of so many of his faithful subjects? You should consider likewise that the great Commander of His Majesty's ships is sent to represent him in person, and that I have the same power, as the King of England's officer, and have my commission signed by his own hand. I hope you will not think me vain in telling you that we have had as powerful enemies as the Nabob to deal with upon the Coast of Coromandel and been attended with success ; the like may happen here. However I hope the Nabob will not reduce us to the cruel necessity of trying our strength, for after all success depends upon God alone, who will aid and assist the injured."<sup>85</sup>

In his letter to Coja Wajid Clive refused to accept the intervention of the French. "Your integrity and friendship," he said, "I can rely on and beg that you and the Seats will be mediators between the Nabob and us."<sup>86</sup> Britain and French were at open war and Clive did not think it fit to entrust the affairs of the Company to declared enemies, who would, besides, have gained great prestige in Bengal at the expense of the English if a peace had been concluded through their mediation.<sup>87</sup> Coja Wajid does not appear to have taken any further part in the negotiations.

According to Orme the Nawab was so exasperated at the attack on Hugli that the Seths were afraid to appear as friends to the English but deputed their ablest agent, Ranjit Rai, to attend the Nawab on his second march against Calcutta and ordered him to correspond with Clive. Through the whole course of the negotiations which ensued Ranjit Rai acted on behalf

85. Hill II, 124.

86. Hill II, 125.

87. Clive to Select Committee, Fort St. George. (Hill II, 175).

of the Company and was mainly responsible for the treaty which brought the negotiations to a close.

On the 25th January Clive thought that the Nawab was earnestly desirous of peace and hoped, in the near future, to be able to return to Madras with the prospect of "a slap at Bussy" on the way,<sup>88</sup> but on the 1st February he began to have misgivings. The Nawab with an army of 30,000 men advanced steadily nearer<sup>89</sup> and on the 4th Messrs. Walsh and Scrafton who had been sent to the Nawab at his own request, instead of finding him twenty miles off at Nawabgunge as they expected, found him at Omichand's garden within the boundaries of Calcutta. The reception of the envoys, too, was so unsatisfactory that Clive resolved on an immediate attack. At 6 o'clock in the morning of the 5th he entered the Nawab's camp in the midst of a thick fog. Clive expected this to clear off by 8 but instead of doing so it became thicker, the troops missed their way and so the action was indecisive. However the Nawab lost 1,300 men, five or six hundred horse with four elephants and decamped to Dumdum. The result of the blow can be seen in the following letter which Ranjit Rai sent Clive the next day.<sup>90</sup>

"I thought that the English were always faithful to their words and agreements, for which reason I interposed with the Nabob in your affairs and dismissed your deputies who could not properly settle the business they came upon. Therefore I wrote you desiring that you would send a paper containing your demands which I would prevail on the Nabob to sign. The Nabob agrees to give you back Calcutta with all the privileges of your phirmaund and whatever goods you lost at Cossimbazar or elsewhere, and will grant you permission to coin siccas in your mint at Calcutta or Allenagur, and that you may make what fortifications you please in Calcutta. Your conduct yesterday morning greatly amazed me and put me to shame before the Nabob. What passed between the Nabob and myself Coja Petruse will inform you ; what has happened will cause no difference in this affair. If you want to accommodate matters send a letter to the Nabob with your proposals, and I will get

88. Clive to Pigot (Hill II, 133).

89. Clive to Secret Committee, London (Hill II, 206).

90. Clive to Secret Committee, London (Hill II, 237) and to his father (Hill II, 242).



them signed and send them back to you, with a sirpah, elephant and jewels. After this the Nabob will decamp and march to Muxadavad. If you think war necessary acquaint me seriously with your intentions, and I will acquit myself of any further trouble in this affair.”<sup>91</sup>

Ranjit Rai had seized the favourable moment. There seems no doubt that Siraj-ud-daula was extremely reluctant to sign a treaty and all the evidence shows that he detested the treaty as soon as he signed it. Ranjit Rai is clearly anxious to impress upon Clive the necessity of coming to terms at once and no doubt Coja Petrus put this still more forcibly when he related to Clive what had happened between Ranjit Rai and the Nawab. Clive did not hesitate for a moment. He knew that if Siraj-ud-daula retreated (as M. Law maintained he ought to have done) he had neither the time nor the means of forcing him to come to terms.<sup>92</sup> He knew further that the delay of even a day or two might have ruined the Company’s affairs, for the French were on the very point of joining the Nawab.<sup>93</sup>

The articles of peace were forwarded but the Nawab proposed to sign them in an evasive manner. A second copy was sent with a peremptory letter from Clive and these were signed on the 9th February. On the 16th Clive wrote to Jagat Seth Mahtab Rai and Maharaja Swarup Chand:—“Omichand has acquainted me that you sent Lalla Rungeet Roy to attend his Excellency the Nabob for the procuring the peace of the country and the re-establishment of the Company’s business and in all my proceedings I have never acted without his advice. The treaty has been agreed to and ratified on both sides in the most solemn manner. The signal kindness which you have shown in your endeavours to restore the currency of the Company’s trade I have made particular mention of in my letters to Europe.”<sup>94</sup>

When Siraj-ud-daula returned to Murshidabad after the conclusion of the peace he changed completely his attitude to-

91. Hill II, 213.

92. Messrs. Clive, Killpatrick, etc., to Select Committee, Fort William (Hill II, 223).

93. Clive to Mr. Payne, Chairman of Court of Directors, (Hill II, 244).

94. Hill II, 224.

wards the Seths. Hitherto his belief in his star had been so overweening that he never imagined that the bankers were necessary to him. He had treated them with disrespect and even with violence. But the skirmish at Budge-Budge, the recapture of Calcutta, the attack on his camp, the reckless bravery of Watson's sailors and above all, the big guns of the ships had caused a feeling of abject fear to succeed his former feelings of contempt for the English and the fact that the English would have no one but the Seths as mediators had taught him that they were men to be reckoned with. They had become, says Law, sponsors, as it were, for the conduct both of the Nawab and the English. And so, from the conclusion of the peace, instead of treating the Seths with disrespect he was extremely polite to them, instead of blows and imprisonment they received acts of kindness and instead of ignoring them he consulted them in everything. The Seths were not deceived by this. They knew that Siraj-ud-daula hated the English, and that the treaty which fear had compelled him to make with them filled him with feelings of humiliation and indignation. They argued that he must necessarily hate those by whose instrumentality the treaty had been concluded. By bribing those who had access to the Nawab and to whom he disclosed his inmost thoughts, their worst fears were confirmed. They found that the change in Siraj-ud-daula's conduct towards them was a hollow sham and that in his heart he had resolved upon their destruction.<sup>95</sup>

Siraj-ud-daula might have taken warning from the fate of Sarfaraz Khan. Even without the assistance of the Europeans the Seths could have formed a party and placed another Nawab on the throne but that would have taken much time and was fraught with danger.<sup>96</sup> It is impossible to say whether they joined the party at Murshidabad which had supported Shaukat Jung, the Nawab of Purnea, in the previous year. The absence of any evidence on the point in the *Seir Mutaqherin* renders it unlikely that they did for the author of that history was in the service of Shaukat Jung at the time and saw the letters which were received from Murshidabad. The character of Shaukat Jung

95. Law's Memoir (Hill, III, 185).

96. Law's Memoir (Hill, III, 175).

given by the author of the *Seir Mutaqherin* also renders it unlikely that he would have been acceptable to the Seths who could hardly have considered him an improvement on Siraj-ud-daula. But so intense was the longing for a change that Shaukat Jung, bad as he was, would in all probability have succeeded in his attempt on the Government had he not ruined his chances by his own folly. M. Law looked back with regret to the chance the French had missed at this period. Three or four hundred Europeans, with a few sepoy, combined with the enemies of Siraj-ud-daula, would have sufficed to place a Nawab on the throne who would have been "to the taste of the house of Jagat Seth and the chief Moors and Rajas." They let the chance slip and "the rash valour of the young Nawab of Purneah, in delivering Siraj-ud-daula from the only enemy he had to fear in the country, made it clear to all Bengal that the English were the only power which could bring about the change that every one was longing for."<sup>97</sup> To no one was this clearer than the Seths for no one had as good a knowledge of the English as they. But at this time the English were helpless at Fulta and the Seths had to bide their time. Their time came with the conclusion of the treaty between Siraj-ud-daula and the English. They knew Siraj-ud-daula's hatred towards the English and that a rupture between them was inevitable sooner or later. His secret but deep resentment towards themselves as the friends of the English caused them to discard the timidity which was natural to them and to do all in their power to hasten this rupture. The path which led to Plassey and all that Plassey was destined to mean in the future had its beginning in Murshidabad and not in Calcutta and it was the Seths, who more than anyone else, placed the feet of the English in that path.

The influence of the Seths at Murshidabad was steadily exerted on the side of the English in the struggle with the French which followed the conclusion of the treaty with the Nawab. On the 12th November 1756 the news reached Madras that war had been declared between England and France and the Council immediately wrote to Admiral Watson urging him

97. *Law's Memoir* (Hill, III, 173).

to attack Chandernagore if he found such a measure practicable.<sup>98</sup> The letter was received in Calcutta on the 13th January, 1757, but an attack on Chandernagore was impossible for the result would have been an immediate alliance between the French and the Nawab and the English were not strong enough to cope with such a combination.<sup>99</sup> Proposals for a neutrality in Bengal between the two nations had already been received from the French and negotiations on this basis proceeded in a desultory fashion throughout January but on February 9th, the date on which the treaty with the Nawab was signed, nothing had been settled. The English, therefore, were free to attack Chandernagore and Clive wished to do so at once. Ranjit Rai was sounded on the matter when he came to Clive with presents from the Nawab on the conclusion of the treaty but Clive received no encouragement from him.<sup>100</sup> He was, no doubt, thinking of the money which the French owed to the house of Jagat Seth and Watts also imagined that this would prevent the Seths from supporting the English.<sup>101</sup> Otherwise everything looked promising. The Nawab had declared in his letters that the enemies of the English would be his enemies and Omichand, who had accompanied Mr. Watts back to Murshidabad, brought a verbal message from the Nawab which Clive construed to be, in some measure, a permission to attack the French.<sup>102</sup> But just as Clive was about to begin his march against Chandernagore he received letters from the Nawab absolutely forbidding hostilities against the French, and declaring that he would assist them with all his force if they were attacked.<sup>103</sup> At the same time the Governor and Council of Chandernagore renewed their proposals for a neutrality in Bengal and the Select Committee at Calcutta thought it advisable to accede to these proposals rather than risk a rupture with the Nawab. A treaty was drawn up by the Committee and, on the 3rd March everything seemed to be settled when, at the

98. Select Committee, Fort St. George to Admiral Watson (Hill, I, 301).

99. Hill, Vol. I, Introduction clv.

100. Clive to Secret Committee, London (Hill, II, 240).

101. Watts to Clive (Hill, II, 229).

102. Clive to Secret Committee, London, (Hill, II, 240).

103. Nawab to Admiral Watson (Hill, Vol. II, p. 230).

last moment, Admiral Watson refused to agree to any neutrality until the articles of the treaty had been ratified by the French Council at Pondicherry and the whole proposal fell to the ground.<sup>104</sup>

Murshidabad again became the centre of interest to English and French alike. Mr. Watts was there urging the Nawab to break with the French. Clive and Watson were sending letters to the same end and the Admiral was, besides, speaking in alarmingly plain language about the fulfilment of the treaty the Nawab had made with the English. On the other side M. Law was pressing the Nawab to ward off the threatened attack of the English on the French by sending reinforcements to Chandernagore. Let M. Law himself tell the tale of what followed :—

“I used to go punctually every day to the Durbar, and I always left it with the most favourable answers. The Nawab gave the most formal orders in my presence and so I counted on a prompt and powerful reinforcement. The Nawab wrote many letters both to the Admiral and to Colonel Clive to persuade them not to attack us. “The wish of the Emperor,” he said to them, “is that foreigners should not make war in his country. I am bound to hinder such troubles. If you attack the French I shall be obliged to oppose you.” He received several replies. In some they seemed inclined to obey him, in others they were undecided ; others again were decisive, they spoke as his masters ; they summoned the Nawab to keep his word ; they referred him to the treaty of Calcutta in which it was said the Nawab would regard as his enemies all those of the English. The mere mention of this treaty made the Nawab indignant and at the same time made him tremble at the experience he had of the superiority of the English arms. The English knew his weakness and made use of it.

In spite of this the reinforcements were ready to start, the soldiers had been paid, the commandant waited only for his marching orders. I went to see him and promised him a large sum if he succeeded in raising the siege of Chandernagore. I

104. Clive to Secret Committee London (Hill, Vol. II, p. 240). Drafts of treaty (Hill, Vol. II, pp. 259—263). Clive to Select Committee, Fort St. George (Hill, Vol. II, p. 266).

also visited several of the chief officers, to whom I promised rewards proportionate to their rank. I represented to the Nawab that the siege was inevitable if the reinforcements did not set out at once, and I tried to persuade him to send off the commandant in my presence. All is ready, replied the Nawab, but before resorting to arms we should try all possible means to avoid a rupture, and all the more so as the English have just promised to obey the orders I shall send them. I recognised the Seths in these. They encouraged the Nawab in a false impression about this affair. On the one hand they assured him that the march of the English was only to frighten us and to make us subscribe to the treaty of neutrality, on the other hand they augmented his natural timidity by exaggerating the English forces, by representing the risk he himself ran in giving us reinforcements which possibly would not suffice to prevent the capture of Chandernagore if the English were determined to besiege it, and that this would also furnish an excuse for them to attack him. They managed so well that they undid in the evening all that I had effected in the morning.

I resolved to visit the bankers. They immediately started talking about our debts, calling my attention to the want of punctuality in our payments. I told them that was not the question just now, that I came to them upon a much more interesting subject which concerned them as well as us in respect to those very debts for which they were asking payment and security. I asked them why they supported the English against us. They assured me of the contrary, and, after much explanation, they promised to make any suggestions I might wish to the Nawab. They added moreover that they were quite sure the English would not attack us, and that I might remain tranquil. Knowing that they were well acquainted with the designs of the English I told them I knew as well as they did what these were, that I saw no way of preventing them from attacking Chandernagore except to hasten the march of the reinforcements which the Nawab had promised, and that as they were disposed to serve us I begged them to make the Nawab understand the same. They replied that the intention of the Nawab was to avoid any rupture with the English, and said many other things the only result of which was to make me see that in spite of their good will they would do nothing

for us. Ranjit Rai, who was their man of business as well as the Agent of the English, said to me in a mocking tone "You are a Frenchman, are you afraid of the English? If they attack you, defend yourselves. No one is ignorant of what your nation has done on the (Coromandel) Coast. We are curious to see how you will get out of this business here." I told him I did not expect to find such a warlike person in a Bengali merchant, and that sometimes people had reason to repent of their curiosity. That was enough for such a fellow, but I saw clearly that the laughers would not be on my side. However the Seths were very polite and I left the house.

The conduct of the Seths was natural. They had everything to fear from Siraj-ud-daula, consequently they needed another Nawab, but the enterprise was difficult without as a preliminary destroying us or at least tying our hands. On the other hand we owed them a great deal of money; it was therefore natural that they should be disquieted at seeing the English march against Chandernagore. For which reason I am much inclined to believe at first that their threats were only to frighten us and to force us to conclude the treaty which they wanted. I remember a somewhat singular incident of this visit which confirms the truth of this idea. The conversation having turned on Siraj-ud-daula, on the reasons to fear him which he had given us as well as the Seths, and on his violent character, I said I understood clearly enough what they meant, that they certainly wanted to make another Nawab. The Seths instead of denying it contented themselves with saying in a low tone that was a thing which ought not to be talked about. Omichand, the English Agent, and who by the way cried "Away with them" wherever he went, was present. If the fact had been false, the Seths would certainly have denied it and would have reproached me for talking in such a way. If the Seths had even thought it was my intention to thwart them, they would also have denied it; but these bankers, considering everything that had happened, the vexations caused us by the Nawab, and our obstinate refusal to help him, imagined that we also should be as satisfied as they were to see him deposed, provided only the English would leave us in peace. The Seths accordingly did not as yet regard us as enemies, and might well be speaking in good faith when they said the English would not attack us.

But when hostilities were once commenced what were the Seths to do? To quarrel with the English was to ruin themselves. Was it difficult for the English to make them see their own interest in the capture of Chandernagore, to make them understand that when the great blow had been struck and the new Nawab enthroned we might be re-established? What hindered them besides from taking the debt on themselves (the English) if such an arrangement was necessary?"<sup>105</sup>

Law's narrative of his personal experiences may be taken as substantially accurate but the conclusions he draws from his facts are singularly unconvincing, in fact inconsistent with his own statements. That the Seths feared the Nawab and wished, like many others at Murshidabad, to remove him was true. That they had to face a possible loss of over Pound 100,000 if the French were ruined was also true. On the other hand, if they desired a revolution, as they did, they must, as men of business, have been prepared to pay the price. If they had organised a revolution themselves, without the aid of the English, it would have been a costly and dangerous business, while if they looked to the English for help, as no doubt they did, they had to recognise the fact that the ruin of the French was an absolutely necessary preliminary measure. Law's supposition that the English induced the Seths to believe that they merely intended to frighten the French into signing the treaty of neutrality is incredible. Clive had meant serious business from the first and had never attempted to conceal the fact, least of all from the Nawab. In February he informed the Nawab that if he had not been ordered to desist from attacking the French he would have taken Chandernagore in two days.<sup>106</sup> The Nawab's prohibition alone forced the English to agree to a neutrality and the proposals for this came from the French.

The Seths were perfectly aware of the true facts. Hence, to consider the possibility of a quarrel between them and the English on the outbreak of hostilities is futile. It is accusing the Seths of not foreseeing the palpable consequences of their own acts. If they had been so much concerned for their

105. Law's Memoir (Hill, Vol. III, pp. 191-194).

106. Clive to the Nawab. "I could have taken the Fort in two days. Your Excellency forbidding me to do it after everything was in readiness has put me to great shame" (Hill, II, 236).



money, instead of thwarting Law in every way, as he says they did, they would have hurried on the reinforcements and strengthened the French by every means in\* their power. Further, when Law speaks of an understanding between the Seths and the English, based on the enthronement of a new Nawab, he is anticipating events by some weeks. If such an understanding existed at that time then Admiral Watson's assertion about the sacredness of his word was an idle boast, no trust can be placed in records, and the compilation of history is a delusion and a snare. The Seths were deceiving Law just as Law deceived the Nawab and the English when necessary, and just as the English, with the exception of Admiral Watson, deceived those whom it was necessary to deceive. The standard of conduct among the men of that time was not high where politics were concerned.

It is strange how Law missed the true inwardness of the "singular incident" that occurred during his interview with the Seths. The next morning he learned how powerless he really was to thwart the Seths for when he saw the Nawab and acquainted him with the plot that was being hatched against him "the poor young man began to laugh, being unable to imagine that I could be so silly as to indulge in such ideas."<sup>107</sup> As Law entered into details he, no doubt, implicated the Seths. The fact was that the fate of the French was sealed and the Seths knew it. Whatever may have been the true feelings of Siraj-ud-daula towards the Seths he continued to consult them. Apart from that men who, according to Law, could find out the secret intentions of the Nawab towards them must have known that Siraj-ud-daula had been pondering for \*two or three days how he should reply to a letter from Admiral Watson which concluded thus:—"It is now time to speak plain, if you are really desirous of preserving your country in peace and your subjects from misery and ruin, in ten days from the date of this, fulfil your part of the treaty in every Article, that I may not have the least cause of complaint: otherwise, remember, you must answer for the consequences: and as I have always acted the open, unreserved part in all my dealings with you, I now acquaint you that the remainder

107. Law's Memoir (Hill, III, 104).

of the troops, which should have been here long since (and which I hear the Colonel told you he expected) will be at Calcutta in a few days, that in a few days more I shall dispatch a vessel for more ships and more troops ; and that I will kindle such a flame in your country, as all the water in the Ganges shall not be able to extinguish. Farewel: remember that he promises you this, who never yet broke his word with you or with any man whatsoever."<sup>108</sup> The Seths knew also that while Law was talking to them Clive was actually in the neighbourhood of Chandernagore waiting and hoping for a letter from the Nawab authorising him to commence hostilities.<sup>109</sup>

The end came on the day after Law's interview with the Seths. In the evening a discussion took place in the Nawab's presence between Watts and Law on the question of a neutrality and the Nawab decided to write to the Admiral. Law indiscreetly remarked that the Admiral would certainly not pay more attention to this letter than to the preceding ones. "What!" said the Nawab, looking angrily at him, "who then am I?"<sup>110</sup> The wound to his vanity was the last straw. He ordered his Secretary to write to the Admiral.<sup>111</sup> The Secretary was in the pay of Mr. Watts and wrote the letter immediately. It was brought to the Nawab, sealed and despatched. The last paragraph of this letter ran as follows:—"You have understanding and generosity: if your enemy with an upright heart claims your protection, you will give him his life but then you must be well satisfied of the innocence of his intentions; if not, whatever you think right, that do."<sup>112</sup> At the same time Mr. Watts wrote to the Select Committee expressly stating that the Nawab had desired him to inform them that if they were determined to attack the French he would not intermeddle

108. Admiral Watson to the Nawab, 4th March, (Hill, II, 273).

109. Clive to the Nawab, 7th March, (Hill, II, 274). "By the time you receive this letter, I shall be as far on my way as Chandernagore, where I will wait without committing any hostilities against the French, till I receive your letter, which I hope will be satisfactory."

110. Law's Memoir, (Hill, III, 195).

111. Hill Vol. I, Introduction, clxii.

112. The Nawab to Admiral Watson, 10th March, (Hill, Vol. II, p. 279).

or give the French the least assistance.<sup>113</sup> These two letters were dated the 10th March. On the 14th Clive attacked Chandernagore and on the 23rd it capitulated.

In the weeks which followed we can trace two parties in Bengal with, at first, two distinct aims. There were, first, the English, who were pressing Siraj-ud-daula to carry out all the articles of the treaty of the 9th February and trying to obtain further concessions not included in the treaty. Above all, they were determined to stamp out the power of the French in Bengal which, now that Chandernagore had fallen, was practically represented by M. Law and his Frenchmen at Cassimbazar. The steady pressure brought to bear upon Siraj-ud-daula to effect this can be indicated by two extracts from letters written to the Nawab by Clive and Watson. "There wants nothing to fix the peace of your kingdom," writes the former, "but that you would deliver up to us the French with their effects, wherever they are to be found in your dominions ; for remember my words Sir, let them take deep root in your mind, that whenever there are two such powerful peoples, the peace of your country cannot be lasting."<sup>114</sup> The latter writes, "I have already told you, and now repeat it again, that while a Frenchman remains in this kingdom I will never cease pursuing him."<sup>115</sup> For three weeks Siraj-ud-daula held out but, at length, says Law, "the redoubled threats of the English supported by the representations of the Seths, brought about what I never had expected, I was never more surprised in my life than when, instead of seeing any result from the fine promises of the Nawab, I received his orders to leave the country quickly unless I preferred to surrender to the English."<sup>116</sup> Law left Cassimbazar on the 16th April, but to the

113. "The Nawab said he could not write, but desired I would inform you that if you were determined to attack the French, he would not intermeddle or give them the least assistance, he only requests to be informed of your sentiments three or four days before you begin upon action." Watts to Select Committee, 10th March, (Hill, Vol. II, p. 278).

114. Clive to the Nawab, (Hill, Vol. II, p. 305).

115. Admiral Watson to the Nawab, (Hill, Vol. II, p. 345).

116. Law's Memoir, (Hill, Vol. III, p. 602).

great indignation of the English he was allowed to go to Patna.

The other party was composed of all those whom Siraj-ud-daula had alienated by his insolence, his violence and his tyranny. It comprised all the chief men of his court with the exception of those worthless favourites whom Siraj-ud-daula had made his chief ministers "a set of low rascally fellows who never look further in the advice they give him than for their immediate pecuniary advantage."<sup>117</sup> At the head of the party were Mir Jafar, Rai Durlabh Ram and the Seths. Before the fall of Chandernagore we read that Mir Jafar absented himself from court and lived retired in his own house.<sup>118</sup> This gave rise to suspicion in the mind of Siraj-ud-daula who, at times, was anxious to be reconciled to his chief general and at times allowed his anger and resentment full sway. On one occasion he had gone so far as to point cannon against the house of Mir Jafar. But it will appear from the history of the plot that Mir Jafar had not yet consented to take active measures in overthrowing the house of Alivardi Khan and did not at first, agree to the proposals of the Seths who wished him to replace Siraj-ud-daula as Nawab. Durlabh Ram was indignant at the superiority manifested by Mohan Lal. The causes of the enmity of the Seths towards Siraj-ud-daula have been sufficiently explained. This was the party that, by inciting the English to a rupture with Siraj-ud-daula, brought about his downfall and the efforts of the Seths were mainly responsible for effecting this result. They, according to M. Law, were the originators of the revolution and their support was a great factor in the success of the English.<sup>119</sup>

The records of the time and the testimony of historians all go to prove that the plot against Siraj-ud-daula had its origin in Murshidabad and not in Calcutta, that Clive was invited to save the people of Bengal from the tyranny of Siraj-ud-daula just as William of Orange was invited to save the English from the tyranny of James II and that the English came as saviours

117. Scrafton to Walsh, (Hill, Vol. III, p. 342).

118. Seir Mutaqherin, Vol. I, p. 753.

119. "They are, I can affirm, the originators of the revolution: without them the English would never have carried out what they have." (Law's Memoir, Hill, Vol. III, p. 185).

and not as aggressors. At the time of the fall of Chandernagore there is no evidence that the English had ever entertained the thought of dethroning Siraj-ud-daula. On the contrary Clive hoped that the capture of that place would attach the Nawab more firmly to the English and thought that it had really done so.<sup>120</sup> On the 30th March he wrote to the Nawab "I once more swear by the God that made me, that I will be true to all that I have promised, and that I have nothing more at heart than the friendship between Your Excellency and the English may last for ever,"<sup>121</sup> and again on the 10th April, "I further call upon Your Excellency in the most sincere manner to put an entire confidence in the English and to believe that they will never forsake you."<sup>122</sup> As late as April 19th Admiral Watson wrote, "Let me again repeat to you, I have no further views than that of peace. The gathering together of riches is what I despise ; and I call on God, who sees and knows the spring of all our actions and to whom you and I must one day answer, to witness to the truth of what I now write."<sup>123</sup> It is certain that on that date Admiral Wason had no knowledge of any plot against Siraj-ud-daula. A few days later he heard from Clive what was going on and wrote no more to the Nawab.<sup>124</sup>

Meanwhile the Seths had not been idle. On the one hand, says Law, they were exciting Siraj-ud-daula against the English. They expressed the greatest indignation at the demands the English were making whenever Siraj-ud-daula consulted them on the subject and urged him not to grant them. On the other hand they were continually pointing out to the English that the Nawab was insincere in all his dealings with them and would attack them at the first favourable opportunity. At times the Seths found themselves in a critical position. On one occasion, says Law, "in reference to certain demands it was necessary to

120. "I am in hopes this last stroke will fix him." Clive to Pigot, (Hill, II, 303). "I have the pleasure to acquaint you that the Nabob has wrote me a letter of congratulation on our success; and that this enterprise, so far from enraging him, has served to attach him more firmly to us." Clive to Select Committee, Fort St. George (Hill, Vol. II, p. 307).

121. Hill, Vol. II, p. 305.

122. Hill, Vol. II, p. 321.

123. Hill, Vol. II, p. 346.

124. Clive to Admiral Watson, (Hill, Vol. II, p. 362).

show the Nawab a paper with the Seths' seal to prove to him that he had agreed to grant them. The Nawab in a rage declared that it had never been his intention to engage himself so far and accused the Seths of having betrayed him. The latter frightened at the storm threw the whole fault on their agent. The notorious Ranjit Rai was driven in disgrace from the Durbar, banished,<sup>125</sup> and assassinated on the road. It was said he had received two lakhs from the English to apply his masters' seal unknown to them. I can hardly believe this, this Agent was attached to the English only because he knew the Seths were devoted to them."<sup>126</sup>

How this atmosphere of mutual suspicion and intrigue gradually led the English to join the plot can be learnt from the correspondence of Watts and Scrafton.<sup>127</sup> It should be borne in mind that Watts was the accredited representative of the English at the Nawab's court. With him was Omichand, who was at this time high in the favour of Watts for his apparent zeal in the cause of the English. Scrafton was at Murshidabad in connection with the affairs of the Dacca factory and had been instructed by Clive to observe how matters were going on while he remained there. He corresponded with Mr. Walsh who deciphered his letters and passed them on to Clive, but this correspondence was in no sense official and the whole responsibility of the affairs of the English rested with Watts. It should be borne in mind, too, that Chandernagore fell on the 23rd March, that from that date the English were exerting every effort to induce the Nawab to expel the French and that M. Law left Cassimbazar on the 16th April.

. On the 5th April Watts requested Clive to write to Jagat Seth and desire him to send his gomastah to Calcutta and order another gomastah named Baijnath to Hugli, "assuring Juggatseat Bigenaut may reside there with the utmost security and safety, that you have some little complaints to make against him, wherein in some affairs you think he has not acted altogether rightly, but when he, Judggutseat, is acquainted with

125. This is a mistake. Ranjit Rai was alive after the battle of Plassey.

126. Law's Memoir (Hill, III, 208).

127. Orme, Vol. II, p. 148. Scrafton to Walsh, (Hill, Vol. II, p. 352).

them you do not doubt but that they will be immediately rectified." After the capture of Calcutta Baijnath had bought a quantity of goods belonging to the Company from the plunderers at half price. Watts promised to send particulars to Clive if he could obtain them and then he says, I think we may ask, though not demand, the difference between the price he bought those goods at and their real value."<sup>128</sup> It is not clear whether Watts himself wished Jagat Seth to send his agents to Hugli and Calcutta or whether he was writing to oblige Jagat Seth. The words of his letter will bear the former sense and it would certainly have been advantageous to have two reliable men like these to act as safe channels of communication between Murshidabad and Calcutta. However Watts gives no reasons for his advice to Clive and nothing further is mentioned about the matter.

That the plotters at Murshidabad were busy is evident from Scrafton's letter to Walsh of the 9th April.<sup>129</sup> The Nawab was still full of resentment at the treatment he received when Clive attacked his camp on the 5th February but at the same time he had a wholesome dread of the English force. His court was like that of the Ptolemy who reigned in Egypt when Pompey fled there after the battle of Pharsalia and "the Colonel should be the Caesar to act as Caesar then did, take the Kingdom under his protection, depose the old and give them a new King to make his subjects happy." Scrafton urges that they should proceed on some fixed plan with regard to their demands on the Nawab and above all that they should take measures in case a rupture should occur between the Nawab and the English. "Give Mr. Watts," he says, "a hint of this, the least encouragement, and he will set about forming a party in case of the worst," and adds "how glorious it would be for the Company to have a Nabob devoted to them." Scrafton evidently knew that there would be no difficulty in forming a party against the Nawab but at the same time it is equally evident that no such party had been joined by the English at this date.

On the 11th Watts wrote mysteriously to Clive: "Omichund and I have had many conversations on a subject I did not know

128. Watts to Clive, (Hill, Vol. II, p. 318).

129. Hill, Vol. III, p. 342.

how to address you about. I opened myself to Scrafton and from him learn that Omichund's and my endeavours for yours and the Major's service will not be disagreeable."<sup>130</sup> But whatever the nature of these conversations may have been in the next paragraph of his letter he asserts that the Nawab was complying with his part of the treaty, though not so expeditiously as they might wish, and emphatically declared that nothing but an open and clear breach of his contract by the Nawab ought to induce them to rekindle the war in Bengal.

The next few days were days full of excitement for Watts who was urging the Nawab to give up the French to the English while Clive and Watson were writing to the same effect from Calcutta. These demands exasperated the Nawab but they also made him tremble. On the 13th, in the presence of Jagat Seth and others he threatened to impale Watts or cut off his head.<sup>131</sup> On the 16th the French had left.<sup>132</sup>

The next day Scrafton had a long conversation with Omichand who informed him that the posture of affairs on that date stood thus:—The Nawab believed that the English would never forgive all the injuries that he had done to them and consequently all their professions of friendship were insincere. The friendship which he pretended to have for the English was inspired by fear. His true feelings were shown by his actions. He had ordered the mouth of the Murcha river to be blocked up because he thought that the King's ships would come round by way of Dacca and attack him. He was keeping a large army on foot. He had driven the French from Cassimbazar but he had not given them up to the English and was keeping them within call. Jagat Seth, Ranjit Rai and several others had told Watts that when he had taken leave of the Nawab the latter had turned about and said, "I will have your head yet." Whenever the French had a strong force he would certainly join them and there were persistent rumours that Bussy was coming from the south. At that time, however, the Pathans were threatening to invade the province from the north. If this happened the Nawab would place his trust in the English but if this did not happen or if the Nawab deviated in any respect from his

130. Hill, Vol. II, p. 323.

131. Watts to Walsh (Hill, II, 330).

132. Watts to Clive (Hill, II, 337).



treaty Omichand recommended the British to break with him and set up another Nawab. Luttee, or Khoda Yar Lutf Khan, was the proper man to set up. He was of a very good character, supported by Jagat Seth and would join the English with 2,000 good horse. Manik Chand, the erstwhile Governor of Calcutta would also join with what force he could bring and all the great men of Murshidabad wished Siraj-ud-daula dead.<sup>133</sup>

Here we see the plot fully developed and the English invited to join it. Respect for the memory of Alivardi Khan had caused Mir Jafar to refuse the overtures made to him by Jagat Seth and the latter had to put up with Khoda Yar Lutf Khan, a commander of 2,000 horse in the Nawab's service, to whom Jagat Seth paid a monthly allowance to protect him against all his enemies—even against the Nawab if occasion should arise.<sup>134</sup> Scrafton was eager to join the plot and chafed against the more cautious proceedings of Watts. His next two letters to Walsh narrate the progress of affairs. On the 20th April he wrote:—"Young minds cannot keep resentment long concealed; his heart broke out to-day. When our vacqueel went to him, the instant he saw him he ordered him to be turned out of the Durbar; as the fellow was going he overheard him say, "I will destroy them and their nation." Meer Jaffar was ordered to march and he would follow himself; when asked the reason he said, "they are always writing me to deliver up the French; I will receive no more of their letters." But for God's sake let us pacify him for the present; things are not ripe. Omichund is gone to Jaggutseat. I know the intent of his sending for him beforehand; it is to communicate to him his desire that we should set up Lettey."—To turn our vacqueel out of the Darbar was to be sure the greatest affront he could put upon us, but he sent for him again presently after, but the vacqueel was come away. It is now morning and His Excellency is sorry for what is done."<sup>135</sup> On the 21st he wrote:—"My mind is continually on the stretch. Politicks interrupt my sleep and give me a downright fever of thought. Watts acts like a man who is conscious of the ill state of his affairs and keeps his books back that his imagination may have some room to flatter

133. Scrafton to Walsh (Hill, II, 342).

134. Stewart, *History of Bengal*, p. 521.

135. Hill, II, 349.

him, but that won't do for me. I do not fear the worst. The horse frets and bites and cannot bear the bit. How glad would he be to fling his rider, and give him a kick that might give full fling to his unruly passions uncontrolled! What farther proofs would we have? The army is daily increasing. In the fit he was in two days ago he ordered Meer Jaffair to march, and promised him six lack the instant he advanced beyond their present encampment, and to make it ten if he was victorious; the next day he starts at the danger, countermands the march, sends for the vacqueel and gives him beetle. Omichand's sent for at night. "What shall I do to satisfy the English? Let me know their demands and I will comply with it for I want to march to the northward".....I believe there's a damn'd flat gust of wind come from the north, which he must meet, but neither will he take us with him nor place the least confidence in us; his mistrust of us is carried to extreme. He is cutting down Placy grove to stop the river that way, and he is flinging up the sand to prevent the water entering this river, at any rate lest our ships should come up. Oh the fool! Finish he must before he goes, so that he will either pay us or fight us in few days."<sup>136</sup>

On the 23rd Watts warned Clive to be prepared for the worst. The Nawab was in heart their bitter enemy and would attack them in conjunction with the French as soon as his apprehensions of the Pathans were removed. But he adds "Though I am sensible how absolutely necessary it is to have a Nawab attached to our interest (which this man will never be) in order to keep the French from re-establishing in this province yet I think we ought to temporize and pacify the Nawab for the present and appear to give over all thoughts of war till the French are marched to a distance, till the Pytans are advanced nearer and till some schemes which Omichund and I hope to effect are ripe for execution, which we shall advise you of, but you may have your carriage, oxen and all necessaries privately prepared to be ready to march at an hour's warning." Before despatching this letter Watts sent Omichand to Khoda Yar Lutf Khan and entered into an engagement with him. It was arranged that whenever the Nawab broke

with the English Yar Lutf Khan was to join them with his whole force and the English were to make him Nawab.<sup>137</sup>

Obviously this engagement would only come into effect if the Nawab committed some overt act against the English and pleased neither Scrafton, nor Omichand nor the malcontents at Murshidabad who advocated the adoption of bolder measures. On the 24th Scrafton, who had hitherto addressed all his letters to Mr. Walsh, thought he was now justified in corresponding with Clive direct. He recapitulates all his reasons for distrusting the Nawab and proceeds:—"Watts has never dared to write all this, and when I told him my mind he told me I wanted to embroil affairs, but now it is too apparent to be concealed. Omichund was glad to find one that has the spirit to think of resistance; Omichund's mind is big with some great project. He told me yesterday he was bound to secrecy, but to keep ourselves in readiness and when matters were ripe he would let you know. I can give a pretty good guess; it is in conjunction with Jagatseat to set up Lattee. There is to be a hundred men at Cossimbuzar who are to join Lattee and storm the Nawab while at that very instant you are to begin your march and when you come near the army you will be joined by some of the principal jemidars. Omichund wants to have the whole honour to himself and cannot bear that anyone should interfere."<sup>138</sup>

Scrafton, who was without responsibilities, hardly appreciated the difficulties of Watts who was answerable for the measures he advocated. Watts felt some doubt about the success of the "Lattee" scheme—at least he dropped it without hesitation for one which he calls a more feasible one. Then there was the treaty which had been made with the Nawab and Watts agreed with Clive that the Nawab's behaviour made it very difficult to know what measures should be pursued. Jagat Seth, Ranjit Rai, Omichand and many others maintained that the Nawab would break the treaty when Clive and Admiral Watson left Bengal or when he received assistance from the French. On the other side he was complying with his contract and granting the English whatever they asked within the

137. Watts to Clive (Hill, II, 353).

138. Hill, II, 357.

compass of his agreement. The main source of contention between the Nawab and the English—the attack on the French—had nothing to do with the articles of peace and the Nawab was not bound to deliver them up to the English. It was true that the Nawab had said that the enemies of the English were his enemies also but this was said in a private letter and not mentioned in the agreement, while on the other hand it was distinctly mentioned that the English were not to make war in Bengal while Nawab remained faithful to the treaty. These were the difficulties of Watts as stated in a letter to Clive of the 26th April<sup>139</sup> and having stated the difficulties he proceeded to solve them—

Since the quarrel  
Will bear no colour for the thing he is,  
Fashion it thus : that what he is, augmented,  
Would run to these and these extremities :  
And therefore think him as a serpent's egg  
Which, hatch'd, would, as his kind, grow mischievous,  
And kill him in the shell.

"When we consider," says Mr. Watts, "there is no dependence on the Nawab, that he is secretly our enemy and that we have almost positive assurances of the French being in his pay and have great reason to believe he will join them on the first occasion, which junction must be fatal to our affairs here, prudence certainly requires us to guard against such an accident. Watts then proceeded to inform Clive that he had received overtures from Mir Jafar through Khoja Petrus the Armenian. The message of Mir Jafar was to the effect that the Nawab was generally disliked, that he ill-used and affronted everybody, that he, himself, expected assassination every time he went to visit the Nawab and therefore always had his son and forces in readiness and that he was persuaded that the Nawab would not keep his agreement. Therefore he and others were ready and willing to join their forces, seize the Nawab and set up another person who might be approved of. "If you approve of this scheme," wrote Watts, "which is more feasible than the other I wrote about, he requests you will write your

proposals of what money, what land you want, or what treaties you will engage in. When I receive your answer I shall endeavour to have a meeting with him, and inform you of the particulars of his scheme, proposals and demands.”<sup>140</sup> On the 28th Watts wrote to Clive again,<sup>141</sup> “The Nabob will not keep his Agreement; this you depend on.....Mr. Jafar’s proposals of joining us I beg you will answer immediately, when I shall make a firm agreement ; therefore send me your proposals and when you receive my letter then be ready to march. The Pytans are returned and the troubles.....are over. Upon this the Nabob is very uppish. The three fourths of the army are his enemies. When the agreement with Meir Jaffeir is settled we cannot have a man more powerful. There is none equal to him.”

One other incident of these days before the English had committed themselves to participation in the plot may be found in the records. On the 28th April Scrafton relates a conversation he had had with Omichund. He says to Clive “I showed Omichund your letter. He said it was by no means fit we should be seen together; he was much suspected, I more. I told him what I feared from Watts’ timorous temper :—

“Fear nothing, in four days I will send Hazardemul and my family as hostages for my fidelity. I will establish a cypher with him, and he shall acquaint you with all the particulars.”

I begged of him to communicate the whole to me; he said No, he had given his oath for which I am accountable to God, but Luttee is not the man, another firmly supported by Jaggutseat.”

“Are you firm to this, if approved?”

“Yes.”

“Shall I go straight down?”

“No; it will alarm greatly. By no means go to Dacca. Stay a day and they overland.”

“Will Juggutseat persevere?”

“Yes ; he is taking proper measures to send away his women, and you may be assured of a part of his army going over to you. You might communicate your terms to Hazardemul. The Nabob’s army is at least half a lack strong.”

140. Hill, II, 363.

141. Hill, II, 366.

Now Sir, had I twenty four hours conversation with you I could say no more. The 10th I am with you. It is high time for me to be gone. Watts is damned jealous of me, and I am watched as a cat does a mouse."<sup>142</sup>

The scene now changes to Calcutta. Clive had been closely following the course of events at Murshidabad. He had been greatly impressed by the letters from Scrafton and on the 26th April had written to Admiral Watson "there is such confusion and discontent at Muxadabad from the Nabob's weak conduct and tyranny, that I have received certain advice of several great men, among whom are Juggut Seat and Meer Jaffier, being in league together to cut him off, and set up Murgodaunyer Cawn Luttee, a man of great family, power and riches, supported tooth and nail by Juggut Seat.....You may be assured, Sir, some great revolution will happen before long and I hope much to the advantage of the Company."<sup>143</sup> On the 28th April he informed Watts that if the Nawab was resolved to sacrifice them they must avoid it by striking the first blow. He asked for more information about Luttee and recommended Watts to be cautious in committing the English to any definite engagement. Finally he hoped the report was true that Mir Jafar wanted to get rid of the Nawab. The report was true and Clive decided that the time for action had come.<sup>144</sup>

On the 1st May the Select Committee took into consideration whether they could, consistently with the Peace made with the Nawab, concur in the measures proposed by Mir Jafar to depose Siraj-ud-daula and make himself Nawab. After weighing the matter maturely the Committee "were unanimously of opinion that there could be no dependance on this Nabob's word, honour, and friendship, and that a revolution in the Government would be extremely for the advantage of the Company's affairs." Their reasons for coming to this conclusion were three. First it was clear that the Nawab had made a treaty with them merely to extricate himself from the danger which threatened him at the time. Secondly, they had reason to believe that he would break the treaty at the first favourable

142. Hill, III, 345.

143. Hill, II, 362.

144. Clive to Watts (Hill, II, 366).

opportuniy. Common prudence therefore obliged them to prevent their own ruin. Lastly, "the Nabob is so universally hated by all sorts and degrees of men; the affection of the army is so much alienated from him by his ill usage of the officers, and a revolution so generally wished for, that it is probable the step will be attempted (and successfully too) whether we give our assistance or not. In this case we think it would be a great error in politics to remain idle and unconcerned spectators of an event, wherein by engaging as allies to the person designed to be set up we may benefit our Employers and the community very considerably, do a general good, and effectually traverse the designs of the French and possibly keep them entirely out of these dominions; this we have reason to expect *as our assistance is courted, and the support of our troops wanted* to countenance and settle the new Subah in his Government."<sup>145</sup>

The next day Clive sent the English proposals to Watts at Murshidabad and said he might enter upon business with Mir Jafar as soon as he pleased. He himself engaged to be at Nyaserai, the rendezvous of the army, twelve hours after hearing from Watts, while Major Killpatrick, who commanded at Calcutta, was all ready to embark at a minute's warning. "Tell Mir Jafar," he added, "to fear nothing, that I will join him with 5,000 men who never turned their backs."<sup>146</sup> However more than a month elapsed before the treaty was signed and Clive could set out on his march to Murshidabad.

First of all Omichand caused trouble. Mir Jafar and the Seths were anxious to keep him in ignorance of the change that had been made in the plot but Omichand knew more than they were aware of and Watts was forced to take him into his confidence.<sup>147</sup> Then facts came to the knowledge of Watts which showed that Omichand was not the sincere friend he pretended to be and his trust in Omichand vanished altogether when the latter demanded 5 per cent of the Nawab's treasure as the price of his participation in the plot. The Nawab was

145. Select Committee Proceedings (Hill, II, 370, 371).

146. Clive to Watts (Hill, II, 372).

147. "I have let Omychund into the scheme and am afraid he (Mir Jafar) will startle when he hears it as he has no opinion of the Gentoos". Watts to Clive 6th May, (Hill, II, 377).

supposed to be worth 40 crores of rupees and Omichand's share would have been 20 lakhs.<sup>148</sup> To thwart Omichand's greed and at the same time to prevent him from betraying the plot, two treaties were drawn up—one on red paper containing a stipulation that Omichand was to receive 20 lakhs and one on white paper in which this stipulation was omitted. All this had, however, caused delay and Watts informed Clive that Mir Jafar was uneasy and anxious to the last degree at not hearing whether his proposals had been accepted not.<sup>149</sup>

Watts received the treaty on the 23rd May. He had promised to finish everything in two hours' time when once the treaty was in his hands but in reality it was nearly two weeks before the treaty was signed by Mir Jafar. Rai Durlabh Ram, the Nawab's treasurer, was responsible for the delay. He confessed afterwards that Omichand had been tampering with him. "In short," said Watts, "no devices has that cunning serpent left unessayed to mar our affairs, because he had not the management of them himself."<sup>150</sup>

It was Clive's turn to feel uneasy. He could not understand why there should be any delay. The plot was being publicly talked about in Calcutta and he began to think of giving it up.<sup>151</sup> On the 5th June he told Watts that he had been duped and ordered him to get the Articles back again.<sup>152</sup> The same night Watts went to the house of Mir Jafar in a close dooly, a kind of sedan chair used only by women and therefore safe from prying eyes. Mir Jafar signed the treaty and swore upon the Koran and his son's head to keep firm to the agreement.<sup>153</sup>

Clive received the treaty on the 11th June. On the 13th he wrote to the Nawab recapitulating all the grievances of the English, charging him with writing to Bussy in the Deccan and paying Law Rs. 10,000 a month by bills drawn on the Seths' house at Rajmahal and declaring that he was marching to

148. Watts to Clive 14th May (Hill, II, 380).

149. Watts to Clive 23rd May (Hill, II, 392).

150. Watts to Clive 6th June (Hill, II, 400).

151. Clive to Watts 5th June (Hill, II, 398).

152. Hill, II, 398.

153. Watts to Clive 6th June (Hill, II, 399).



Cassimbazar to put their disputes to arbitration before Jagat Seth, Mohan Lal, Mir Jafar and the rest of his great men.<sup>154</sup> The same day he marched. On the 19th he captured Cutwa. Here on the 21st he held his famous Council of War from which he retired to a neighbouring grove and spent an hour in deep meditation. On his return he gave the order for an advance. On the 22nd his army crossed the river and at one in the morning of the 23rd arrived at Plassey. At daybreak the battle commenced and by 4 o'clock in the afternoon Siraj-ud-daula's army was in full flight. The next morning Mir Jafar paid a visit to Clive. He expressed much gratitude for the great services rendered him by the English and assured Clive in the most solemn manner that he would faithfully fulfil the treaty he had made with them. He then proceeded to Murshidabad while Clive encamped without to prevent ravage and disorder.<sup>155</sup>

The Seths had played no part in these events. Their sphere of action was the Council-chamber rather than the battlefield. All we read of them is that they persuaded Luttee, who had hoped to be made Nawab, to throw in his lot with Mir Jafar.<sup>156</sup> It would be fair to conclude that their conduct before the battle was not different from their conduct afterwards and hence we can assert that they had been consistently loyal to their engagement with the English and were untainted with the avarice of Omichand and the trickery and treachery of Rai Durlabh Ram and others.

The English soon had reason to believe that they had been duped. Messers. Watts and Walsh were sent to Murshidabad to receive the money promised in the treaty with Mir Jafar and sent the following report to Clive: "We waited on the Nabob this morning and went through the ceremony of his Durbar for full two hours, when he and Roy Dulup retired with us, but instead of Juggut Seat's advancing the money, Roy Dulup with his whole stock of Gentue rhetorick endeavour to persuade us that the Treasurer had been examined, and it appeared there could not be above a crore and 40 lack in the Treasury,

154. Clive to the Nawab (Hill, II, 405).

155. Clive to Select Committee Fort St. George (Hill, II, 441).

156. "Rungeet Roy informs me that Juggatseat has secured Luttee". Watts to Clive (Hill, II, 400).

and added that Juggut Seat could not advance crores of rupees; we were not acquainted with facts sufficiently to contest the matter well with Roy Dulup, but desired we might talk with Moonloll and carry him to visit Saabut Jung,<sup>157</sup> which with some difficulty, on Roy Dulup's part, was consented to. When we asked Roy Dulup at what time he and Monickchund proposed setting out for camp, he answered till this affair was settled he could not think of going. In short he appears to pride himself in shuffling and tricking, and we are persuaded, whilst he is Minister, our affairs will meet with all the interruption that Gentue cunning can raise. We should be glad you should interrogate Omichand and let us know his sentiments of the Nabob's wealth. He told Mr. Watts he knew all the places where the treasures were hoarded; for hoards there are and many by the information we have had had. He would certainly be a necessary person here, if he was not always so full of taking care of himself."<sup>158</sup>

Clive decided to go to the City himself the next day to see into the matter and checkmate the chicanery and villainy of Rai Durlabh Ram. He also intended to see the Nawab and Jagat Seth and consult with them on the measures to be taken to secure the person of Siraj-ud-daula and settle the new government on a solid foundation.<sup>159</sup> At one o'clock, however, he was warned by Watts and Walsh not to come. "Rungeet Roy," they said, "is despatched to us by Jaggatseat to desire that you will not come into town this afternoon for treachery is intended you. A consultation was held last night between Meerum, Roy Dulup and Cossim Hussain Cawn about cutting you off at your visit to the Nabob. You may return on pretence of illness if you are on the road, but it will be necessary to write of it. Jaggatseat will then visit you to-morrow morning. He begs you will not mention a syllable of this intelligence as you value his life."<sup>160</sup>

This happened on the 27th June and in consequence of the warning he had received Clive did not enter the city till the

157. Clive.

158. Watts and Walsh to Clive 26th June, (Hill, II, 430).

159. Clive to Select Committee Fort William 27th June 1 p.m. (Hill, II, 431).

160. Watts and Walsh to Clive, 27th June, 1 p.m. (Hill, II, 431).

morning of the 29th. In the afternoon he paid a ceremonial visit to Mir Jafar, handed him to the masnad and saluted him as Nawab whereupon the new Nawab received the congratulations and homage of his courtiers. "On my return home," writes Clive, "I had a visit from Juggat Seat with whom I had a good deal of conversation. As he is a person of the greatest property and influence in the three subahs and of no inconsiderable weight at the Mogul's Court, it was natural to determine on him, as the properest person to settle the affairs of that Government; accordingly when the Nawab returned my visit this morning, I recommended to him to consult Juggat Seat on all occasions, which he readily assented to, and immediately proposed, that as the money in the Treasury fell short of his expectations, and was not sufficient to satisfy his obligations to us, and leave him wherewithal for his necessary expenses, Juggat Seat should likewise mediate that matter between us; which proposal was too agreeable to me to decline, for, as I had sufficient reason to think great sums had been secreted and made away with by his Ministers, it would have been both a difficult and invidious task for me to have sifted into this affair. Accordingly we agreed to visit Juggat Seat immediately, that all subject for heart burnings on this account on either side might be removed out of hand; which being put in practice, Juggat Seat after a long but friendly debate settled the point as follows: that we should be paid one-half of our demand immediately, two-thirds in money and one-third in jewels, plate and goods, and the other half should be paid within three years at three yearly and equal payments. When I consider the state of the Treasury as it appeared to us, and that a sufficiency must necessarily be left to the Nabob for payment of his troops, to whom long arrears were due for services under the late Nabob, I cannot say but the terms exceeded my expectation. As it was absolutely necessary to satisfy Roy Dulub, who is the principal Minister, and through whose hands our affairs must pass, I thought it not improper to admit him to a commission of 5 per cent and Juggat Seat representing that he had been a sufferer of seven lack by the French, and as he was joining in measures for their extirpation, it was probable he should never be paid; I agreed, provided you approved of it, that he might take what goods of theirs should be found at their out-Settle-

ments and aurungs, and the balance should be made good by our Company, provided he could not recover it from them. After which he assured us, that we might be persuaded of his best services, and rest satisfied that he would get the present Nabob confirmed from Delhi, represent our transactions in the fairest light, and procure for us any phirmaund we may have occasion for. His advice to the Nabob in general was to replace Allyverdi Cawn's officers in their old posts."<sup>161</sup>

Clive and Mir Jafar had been accompanied to the house of the Seths by Watts, Scrafton, Miran and Rai Durlabh Ram. Omichand, too, was with them but was not invited to a seat on the carpet where the conference took place. So he had taken his seat in the outer part of the hall and thought of the riches that would soon be his. When the conference was over Clive decided that the time had come to undeceive him and Scrafton said to him "Omichand, the red paper is a trick; you to have nothing." The shock was too great for the old man. He would have sunk to the ground in a fainting condition had not one of his attendants caught him in his arms. He was carried to his palankeen and then taken home. But his mind was affected, a pilgrimage to Malda did him more harm than good and he spent the remaining months of his life in a state of imbecility delighting in dressing himself in rich garments and ornamenting himself with the most costly jewels.<sup>162</sup>

The revolution was consummated with another tragedy. Siraj-ud-daula who had fled from Murshidabad a few hours before the arrival of Mir Jafar in the city, was captured near Rajmahal in such a distressed condition that he was almost without clothes to his back.<sup>163</sup> He arrived in Murshidabad on the 2nd July, at night, and was immediately despatched.<sup>164</sup> Clive states that the Nawab would have spared him but his son, Miran, and others of his great men thought his death neces-

161. Clive to Select Committee Fort William 30th June, (Hill, II, 437).

162. Orme, Vol. II, p. 182.

163. I have just had advice of Surajah Dowla's being taken near Rajahmaul in a distressed condition with hardly cloaths to his back." Clive to Select Committee, Fort St. George (Hill, II, 442).

164. Clive to Select Committee Fort St. George (Hill, II, 443).

cary.<sup>165</sup> "Tyrant as he was," says Orme, "if he had respected the advice of his grandfather Allyverdy, and not have excited the detestation of the Gentoos, at the same time that he was rendering himself hateful to the principal Mahomedan officers of his court, the English would have found no alliance sufficient to have ventured the risque of dethroning him: but it is probable that the same iniquity of character which urged him to the destruction of Calcutta, would soon have called forth other avengers of other atrocious deeds."

## 4.

The alliance which had brought about the revolution tended to fall to pieces when its end had been attained. The triumphal procession of boats which carried to Calcutta the gold and silver paid to the English under the award of Jagat Seth was intended to efface the humiliation of the sack of Calcutta by Siraj-ud-daula but, not unnaturally, it was the cause of much heart burning to the people of Murshidabad. A year ago the English had been a body of comparatively helpless merchants, by whom they had been courted and bribed and now the unpleasant truth was daily becoming apparent that the power of these merchants was overshadowing that of the Nawab of Bengal. Clive who was regarded as the embodiment of this power, was looked upon as a rival rather than an ally by Miran who was continually urging his father to free himself from English domination. Expression was given to the general feeling by one of Mir Jafar's courtiers in full durbar, "Sir," said the Nawab to him, "your people have had a fray with the Colonel's people; Is your honour to know, who is that Colonel Clive, and in what station Heaven has seated him?" "My Lord Nawab," replied the culprit with hardly veiled sarcasm, "Me, to quarrel with the Colonel! me! who never get up every morning, without making three profound bows to his very jackass? How then could I be daring enough after that to fall out with the rider himself?"<sup>166</sup> That Clive triumphed over this hostile feeling was due to the glamour which surrounded him and the genuine regard which Mir Jafar felt towards him.

165. Clive to Select Committee, Fort William (Hill, II, 444).

166. *Seir Mutaqherin* Vol. II, p. 19.

What Mir Jafar felt most irksome was the restraint exercised by Clive upon his dealings with his subjects. Rai Durlabh Ram had been one of the chief allies of Mir Jafar but after the revolution mutual distrust replaced their former feelings of friendship and it was only the restraining hand of Clive which saved Rai Durlabh Ram from destruction. Other Hindus who occupied important posts in the administration of the province were also full of fears for their safety. Troubles broke out at Midnapore and Purnea. Above all Ram Narain, the Governor of Patna, believed with truth that he was marked out for ruin and was forming plans for resisting Mir Jafar.

Mir Jafar was not an Alivardi Khan who showed that he could keep a province that he had won. According to the *Seir Mutaqherin* he and his son plunged into all kinds of pleasures without bestowing one single thought on affairs of state. A great change, too, had taken place in Mir Jafar. Formerly he had rendered himself conspicuous by his liberality, especially to his soldiers, but now he showed himself "a wretch of the most sordid avarice and a very carrion in parsimony and stinginess." "My Lord Nawab," said one of his friends one day, "a time was when you were renowned for liberality; What is become of it now?" "Friend," answered he unconcernedly, "in Alivardi Khan's time, the matter consisted only in taking up water from a river, and in bestowing another's money; but now that the river is become my own, my heart aches whenever I am obliged to part with any of its water, were it even to a friend."<sup>167</sup> The result of this was that his soldiers, whose pay was always in arrear, became extremely discontented and a constant source of danger to himself.

Scrafton, the political resident at Murshidabad, found himself unable to contend with the confusion that reigned everywhere. The Nawab was distracted with suspicions of treachery at Murshidabad, he was evading compliance with the articles of the treaty with the English, rebellions were breaking out in all directions, and it was reported that Ram Narain was joining Sujah-ud-daula, the Nawab of Oude. Scrafton was convinced that if that happened Bengal was lost. On the 7th November he wrote to Clive, "Sir, I can only say, if you don't set out,

167. *Seir Mutaqherin* Vol. II, p. 41.

with or without troops, permit me to go to Calcutta." "I shall march," said Clive in answer, "with the whole army. I have wrote to the Nabob and Ram Narrain, of which copies are enclosed you. Do not suffer yourself to be unquieted beyond reason at the situation of affairs, but consider them coolly, and give me daily accounts of what is passing. The march of the army is absolutely necessary as well to support the Nawab against his enemies, as to see justice done ourselves."<sup>168</sup>

The presence of Clive acted like magic. It had been with the greatest difficulty that Mir Jafar could be prevailed upon to issue out of his treasury 10,000 rupees. Soon after Clive joined him he had paid twenty-five laks and given security for the payment of ten more.<sup>169</sup> Rajah Ram, the Midnapore rebel, submitted to him, the rebels of Purnea were dispersed, and Ram Narain was reconciled with the Nawab and confirmed in his governorship. On the 18th February, 1758, Clive could say "All domestic troubles are now happily ended; and the Nabob seems so well fixed in his government, as to be able, with a small degree of prudence, to maintain himself quietly in it. For ourselves, we have been so fortunate in these transactions as to attach to us the most considerable persons in the kingdom; and, by the constancy with which we successively supported Rajah Ram, Roy Dullub, and Ram Narrain, to acquire the general confidence, and make our friendship be solicited on all sides."<sup>170</sup>

Clive returned to Murshidabad in May but two days before he entered the city trouble was caused by Miran, who was in charge. His jealousy of Clive was increased by the success of the latter in quelling the rebellions that had threatened the state and he was intensely irritated by the fact that Rai Durlabh Ram was returning in Clive's company. He affected to believe that his life was in danger, gathered an army and marched out of the city. The result was a panic. "The markets were deserted, the shops were shut, the bankers, even the Seats, would do no business and many principal families prepared to

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168. Malcolm's Life of Clive Vol. II, 374, 325.

169. Malcolm's Life of Clive Vol. II, 377.

170. Malcolm's Life of Clive Vol. II, 338.

send their effects."<sup>171</sup> In a day or two, however, Miran apologised to Clive for his conduct.

It was determined, nevertheless, to dismiss Rai Durlabh from his post of Diwan. Nuncomar had been added to the number of his enemies and Rai Durlabh had given fresh cause of complaint by not satisfying the demands of the army and compelling the Nawab to break into his own hoards of gold for the purpose. The scheme against the Diwan would not have been free from risk, says Orme, "if Nuncomar and others had not estranged the powerful house of the Seats from the interests of Roydoolub, by representations that they would be called on for money to supply the Nabob's exigencies, if Roydoolub continued to delay the supplies from the revenues." In August the Nawab left Murshidabad on a visit to Clive in Calcutta and the opportunity was taken to make an attack on the house of Rai Durlabh. The attack was frustrated by Scrafton who sent news of the event to Watts, then with the Nawab, and Watts persuaded the Nawab to allow Rai Durlabh to accompany them to Calcutta.<sup>172</sup>

The enhancement of the power of the English in Bengal had been felt by the Seths. We have seen that the establishment of a mint at Calcutta did not, for some years, do them any harm owing to their command of the specie of the province and the operation of the practice of batta. But in other directions they found that when their interests clashed with those of the English they had to give way. Before Clive set out from Murshidabad to march against Ram Narain he had been anxious to secure assignments on the revenues of Burdwan, Nuddea and Hugli for the payment of the money still due under the treaty together with written agreements from the zemindars of those districts binding them to make the payments regularly to the English. This was the method followed by the Seths in obtaining security for their loans to the government and at this time they had demands on most of these very zemindars. Naturally they were opposed to Clive's plan but when he threatened them with the loss of the friendship of the

171. Orme, Vol. II, p. 353.

172. Orme, Vol. II, p. 356—358.



English they desisted from opposition and the arrangement which Clive wished was concluded.<sup>173</sup>

It will be remembered that Jagat Seth had promised to procure a farman from Delhi confirming Mir Jafar as Nawab of Bengal. On the 23rd December, 1757, Clive wrote, "the Nabob's confirmation is not yet procured at Delhi, nor can I judge when it will. The difficulty is in the price."<sup>174</sup> On the 29th January, 1758, however the news came that the patents had been made out and titles granted to Miran and other members of Mir Jafar's family. Jagat Seth informed Clive that he too had been created an Omra of the Empire with several high-sounding titles. A year later Clive wrote the following letter to the Seths on the subject:—

The President to the Seats, dated 31st January, 1759. No. 281.

"I always understood, that when you had procured me the Sunnod for a 6,000 Munsub and 5,000 Horse, with the title of Zubdit-al-Mulk Nazier-ad-Doula, that the Nabob would have favoured me with a Jaguire, equal to the Rank I received by my Sunnod; but to this day I have not heard a Word from him concerning it. As there is a strong friendship subsisting between you and me I beg leave to give you the Trouble to apply to the Nabob concerning this Affair and that I may have a Jaguire equal to my Rank."<sup>175</sup>

This letter brought the following reply:—

From the Seats to the President. No Date: Received 20th February, 1759.

Your Two obliging Letters, One answering ours which accompanied some Apples to you; the other, that you understood, when we had procured you a Munsub and Titles, that the Nabob would have favoured you with a Jaguire, equal to the Rank you received by your Sunnod, but that to the Writing of your Letter, you have not heard from him concerning it: that on Account of the Friendship subsisting between us, you

173. Clive to Select Committee, London, (Malcolms' Life of Clive, II, p. 332).

174. Clive to Select Committee, London, (Malcolm's Life of Clive, II, 331).

175. First Report of Select Committee of the House of Commons. Appendix No. 7, p. 224.

desired we would apply to the Nabob and procure it ; we have with great Pleasure received, and are rejoiced to hear you are in good Health, for which we return God thanks : Agreeable to your Orders we addressed the Nabob to give you a Jaguire : he has long determined not to grant Jaguires in the Subahship of Bengal : Orissa is poor, but if it is agreeable to you to have one in the subahship of Behar, it will be immediately granted you of this I thought proper to advise you. Please to acquaint us with your Resolution on this Affair. We are going to a Place of Devotion with all our Family in a Day or two, accompanied by some of the Nabob's Forces. By the favour of God we hope to return in Six Weeks."<sup>176</sup>

Here the matter dropped and Clive thought no more about it but his suggestion was to bear fruit in the future.

Just at this time the Seths fell under the suspicion of the Nawab who tried to prevent them from going on their pilgrimage. Fresh troubles had broken out in the beginning of 1759. The Emperor Alamgir the Second had not even the semblance of authority and was a mere instrument in the hands of his vazier. His eldest son, the Shahzada Shah Alam unable to bear this state of thralldom, escaped from Delhi, gathered an army and meditated the conquest of Bengal. The news caused the greatest consternation at Murshidabad. Ram Narrain was suspected of having invited the Shahzada into Behar and Jagat Seth implicated in the affair. Malcolm, in his Life of Lord Clive, gives the following account of the Seths' quarrel with the Nawab with comments upon it :—"Juggeit Seth and his brother had obtained leave to proceed on a pilgrimage to Parasnath, and had commenced their journey, when information was received that they were in correspondence with the Shahzada, and had actually furnished him with the means of paying his new levies. The Nabob, giving credit to this report, sent to stop them ; but they refused compliance with his orders, and proceeded under the guard of the two thousand men which he had furnished for their escort. These troops, on receiving a promise of the liquidation of their arrears, readily transferred their allegiance from the Prince to his bankers. The Nabob,

176. First Report of Select Committee of the House of Commons. Appendix No. 7, p. 224.

if he had had the disposition, would probably have found himself without the means of coercing these wealthy subjects into obedience. The principal bankers of India command, through the influence of their extensive credit, the respect of sovereigns, and the support of their principal ministers and generals. Their property, though often immense, is seldom in a tangible form. Their great profits enable them to bear moderate exactions ; and the prince who has recourse to violence towards one of this class is not only likely to fail in his immediate object of plunder, but is certain to destroy his future resources, and to excite an impression of his character that must greatly facilitate those attempts against his life and power to which it is the lot of despots to be continually exposed." The suspicions against Jagat Seth were probably without foundation and we soon afterwards find him in favour with the Nawab.

When Mir Jafar heard that Clive had chased the Shahzada beyond the borders of Behar he was full of gratitude to the man to whom, he declared, he was indebted for his government the second time. Warren Hastings, who had succeeded Scrafton at Murshidabad, wrote to Clive informing him that the Nawab intended to confer a jaghir upon him "being ashamed that you should do so much for him without prospect of reaping any advantage to yourself by it." The difficulties of giving Clive a jaghir in Bengal were overcome by Jagat Seth who recommended that he should be given the quit-rent arising from the lands ceded to the Company in the vicinity of Calcutta and this was done. The reward was great but, declared the Nawab, very little adequate to the services he had received from the Colonel.<sup>177</sup>

The news was conveyed to Clive in the following letter from the Seths which was undated but received on the 4th June, 1759.

"Some time ago we were favoured with an obliging Letter, from you to this Purport, That you had been honoured with a Munsub, of the Rank of 6,000 and the Command of 5,000 Horse from the Presence ; and that we, who are your faithful Servants, had procured you the Sunnod, but that as yet no Jaguire had been granted for the same, and desiring that we should address the Nabob as we thought proper on that Affair, and procure the

177. Malcolm's *Life of Clive*, Vol. II, 423, 424.

181. Cotton Cloth.

Rs. A. P.

To presents given &c.—					
6 Pieces of flowered Velvet at Rs. 261-9-6 per piece	...	1,570	8	0	
1 Otter box set with diamonds, Sicca Rs. 3,000	... ..	3,222	3	6	
1 piece of China Brocade	... 215 0 0				
2 ditto brought by Captain Brohier	... 552 0 0				
		767	0	0	
4 pieces of Broad Cloth at Rs. 70 per piece	...	280	0	0	
4 pairs of side Lanthorns at Rs. 120 per pair	...	280	0	0	
8 Twizer Cases at Rs. 55 each	... ..	440	0	0	
		6,959	5	6	
		150	0	0	
					8,359 5 6
To money given to his servants, viz :—					
Jemadars, Chobdars, Peons, attending Servants, Dammar boys and bearers, etc.	...				8,359 5 6
					500 0 0
To Dolchand's expense—					
To his diet	... ..	150	0	0	
					150 0 0
To presents given—					
2 pieces of flowered Velvet	... ..	457	3	0	
1 ditto of China Brocade	...	215	0	0	
2 ditto of Broadcloth	...	100	0	0	
		772	3	0	
To Rattoonchund, his diet					
To Presents—	...				922 3 0
2 pieces of flowered Velvet	... ..	532	7	0	
1 ditto of Broadcloth	...	50	0	0	
Buxis to the Servants	...	50	0	0	
		782	7	0	
To Birjo Mohun Shaw, his diet					
	...	100	0	0	932 7 0

		Rs. A. P.
To present—a piece of flowered Velvet ...	284 14 0	
To Moonsubdar, his diet ...	100 0 0	384 14 0
To Presents—		
2 pieces of Broad Cloth	140 0 0	
Ready money given Sunt Rs. 3,000 ...	3,597 3 6	
	<u>3,737 3 6</u>	
		3,837 3 6
To paid Mr. Hackett as per Bill Co's. Rs.	2,001 6 0	
	<u></u>	1,883 2 8
To Broad cloth, half piece for putting over the Elephant ...	35 0 0	
To Buxis to the people that brought present of Fruits, Sunt Rs. 20 ...	20 10 0	
	<u></u>	55 10 1

Arcot Rupees 17,374 1 6

Calcutta :  
6th October, 1759.

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Errors Excepted  
(Sgd.) ROBERT CLIVE.

One extract from the bill for the Nawab's entertainment will show the kind of presents made by the Company to a Nawab of Bengal :—

To 3 Waters, 1 Beetle Box and Rose-water Bottle in silver ornamented with Lazuli ...	2,186 0 0
To 1 ditto ditto ...	1,404 0 0
To 1 Rose-water Bottle and Stand .	164 0 0
Waxwork—	
To a Turkish Lady .	222 0 0
To a Boy and Girl ...	108 0 0
To the Virgin Mary ...	33 0 0
To 12 standing Venusses to pull off behind ...	840 0 0
To a lying ditto ...	84 0 0
To 6 kissing figures ...	72 0 0
To 8 ladies under glasses ...	160 0 0
To Joseph and Mary ...	33 0 0
To a Roman charity ...	56 0 0
To a curious cut Lustre containing 32 snake arms and fans, etc. ...	4,608 0 0
To 1 ditto. ditto. ditto ...	4,608 0 0

To a pair of plate glasses, 55 inches by 33½ inches	..	1,479	0	0
To 1 ditto ditto 47½ inches by 34½ inches	...	568	0	0
To 1 ditto ditto 45½ inches by 34 inches	...	426	0	0
To 1 double barrel Gun ...	...	180	0	0
To 1 silver mounted Gun with a gold lock-hole	...	124	0	0
To a pair of double barrel Pistols ...	...	210	0	0
To 2 ladies richly drest in silver, playing two tunes. <sup>182</sup>	...	2,080	0	0

In February 1760 to the great misfortune of Mir Jafar, Clive left India. Holwell succeeded him at Governor but in August was superseded by Vansittart. In the beginning of the year the English had to take the field to defend Mir Jafar once more against the Shahzada who had invaded the province with a more formidable force than that of the preceding year. The Mahrattas, too, entered the province from the south and by their ravages put a stop to the collection of the revenues upon which the Company depended to meet the expenses of the year. In March the Chief and Council at Dacca were asking Holwell for an immediate supply of money or permission to borrow from the house of Jagat Seth.<sup>183</sup> Holwell had no money and told them to go to Jagat Seth. By May Holwell also found himself constrained to apply to the Seths for money but he was informed that Mir Jafar had been making such large demands upon them that they were unable to comply with his request. Holwell took the refusal very badly. He wrote to Warren Hastings, "the necessity of the Company's affairs is such, that I have been obliged to apply to the Seats for a loan of ten or 15 lack, which they, under various pretences have refused: I judged their own security as well as an opportunity of obliging the Company, would have influenced their ready compliance; but herein I judged ill. However, I doubt not an occasion may occur, for manifesting a proper resentment to that house for this refusal."<sup>184</sup> Representations from Warren Hastings on the Seths' behalf merely drew from Holwell a grudging admission and renewed threats. "The apology you make for the Seats", he wrote, "and they for themselves, we must submit to; but though they may hold good respecting the large loan I requested

182. Long's Selections from Unpublished Records p. 192.

183. Long's Unpublished Records, p. 207.

184. Holwell, India Tracts (1774), p. 58.

of them, yet had they been inclined to have shewn a readiness to oblige the Company, they would at least have made a tender to me of such a sum as they could have spared with convenience to themselves. One reason they allege to me for their refusal is, their having refused the Nabob, which I now find had not a word of truth in it. Had they complied with my request it would have armed them with the best reason they could have urged for not complying with his demand ; and it would have been incumbent on us to screen and protect them from any violence intended against them.—A time may come, when they may stand in need of the Company's protection, in which case they may be assured they shall be left to Satan to be buffeted."<sup>185</sup>

Before many months had passed Holwell brought "Satan" on the scene. In July, Mir Jafar's eldest son, Miran, was killed by lightning while fighting against the Shahzada and the old Nawab was crushed with the blow. His soldiers, taking advantage of his grief and consternation, banded together to force him to pay them their arrears. On the 14th a clamorous mob surrounded the palace, insulted the treasurer and other officers of government, pulled them out of their palanquins and inflicted other indignities upon them. The same scenes were repeated the next day. On the 16th the mutineers became bolder. Some posted themselves at the doors of the palace and allowed none to enter or leave. Others mounted on every wall, even on those which are held sacred in the East, used the most insulting language towards the Nawab and threatened him with death if their demands were not complied with. They broke off fragments from the walls and pelted every courtier or attendant who came in sight with them so that several persons of distinction were wounded. This scene lasted for two days until Mir Kasim Ali Khan, the Nawab's son-in-law, paid the soldiers three laks of rupees from his own treasury and became security for the rest of their arrears.<sup>186</sup>

The internal disorders of the country combined with the unsatisfactory progress of the operations against external ene-

185. Holwell, *India Tracts*, p. 62.

186. Warren Hastings to Select Committee, Calcutta (Vansittart's Narrative, Vol. I, p. 71).



mies and the empty state of the Company's treasury determined Holwell to bring about a change in the government. He prepared a memorial on the state of the affairs of the province for the new Governor who was on his way to Calcutta. In this memorial he laid at the door of Mir Jafar all the evils under which the country was suffering, he charged him with treacherous dealings with the Dutch in the previous year although Major Caillaud pointed out to him that this was never clearly proved and even if it had been proved the fault had been condoned by Clive ; he charged him with corresponding with the Shahzada although Warren Hastings declared that the document was a forgery ; he charged him with the murder of persons who were alive when Mir Jafar himself was dead<sup>187</sup> and he got £ 30,000 for himself when his scheme was successful.<sup>188</sup> The dethronement of Mir Jafar, condemned by Clive,<sup>189</sup> protested against by seven of the Company's servants in Bengal, approved by the Court of Directors in such hesitating terms that Warren Hastings did not venture to translate the despatch to the new Nawab,<sup>190</sup> was carried out by Governor Vansittart in October and Mir Kasim was installed in his place.

A month before Jagat Seth had come into novel relations with the new Governor as the following letter will show :—  
 "Saturday the 20th of Morum, at 6 o'clock in the evening, as I was returning from dinner upon plain ground my foot slipped and I fell down, by which accident my shoulder was disjointed and two hours after I was bereaved of my senses. Shortly after a Commungore came and gave me physic, and by God's grace it was replaced by the 2nd of Zuffer, and I am much better, but yet I have not got the use of my arm ; and I have received your favourable letter and the oil and extract of horn and other medicine and therefore I think you have done it from your heart, and since their arrival I have gained much strength, but you did not mention in what manner the medicines were to be applied, for this reason I have not used them, they remain as you sent them. I hope you will order to the people to write

187. Long's Selections from Unpublished Records, p. 428.

188. Malcolm's Life of Clive, Vol. II, p. 289.

189. Malcolm's Life of Clive, Vol. II, p. 255.

190. Hastings to Vansittart, 14th July, 1762. (Vansittart's Narrative, Vol. II, p. 69.)

the direction and what regimen is necessary to be observed and shall immediately comply with them. My hand was lost to me, but by your favour I have received the use of it again, and I beg you will enquire and send me what other medicines may be necessary to remove the pain, and write me concerning the application, and also send a Doctor that perfectly understands the nature of the medicines. By your complying with these requests, after my recovery, as long as I have life I shall retain a grateful sense of it.

P.S.—Since yesterday, the 2nd Zuffer, Doctor Hancock has given me physic, and I write this for your information, and I imagine you wrote to Doctor Hancock about it, and therefore from your favour it is I have received so great benefit. God grant you long life and many riches.”<sup>191</sup>

5.

The dethronment of Mir Jafar, the transportation of himself and his family to Calcutta and the installation of Mir Kasim in his place, were carried out under the superintendence of Vansittart who came to Murshidabad for the purpose. In the measures he took for settling the new government on a satisfactory foundation he sought the advice and assistance of Jagat Seth.<sup>192</sup> Mir Kasim also came to Jagat Seth for assistance in the shape of money—“a disagreeable operation,” says the Seir Mutaqherin, “to which he was driven by the necessity of his affairs.” These he found in an appalling state. Immense sums were due to the troops and large payments had to be made to the English. He found in the treasury about forty or fifty thousand rupees in cash and gold and silver plate to the value of three laks.<sup>193</sup>

Mir Kasim applied himself resolutely to alter this state of things. The gold and silver plate was coined into money, the expenses were curtailed and order and regularity introduced into the administration of the finances. All who had taken advantage of the disorders which reigned under the former government to enrich themselves dishonestly were compelled

191. Long's Selections from Unpublished Records, p. 234.

192. Vansittart's Narrative, Vol. I, p. 138.

193. Vansittart's Narrative, Vol. I, p. 139.

to disgorge and the enquiry was so searching that not even slave-women and eunuchs of the palace escaped.<sup>194</sup> Reforms were made in every branch of the administration. The army was re-modelled and disciplined after the English fashion. Guns and muskets were manufactured and the translator of the *Seir Mutaqherin* declares that the latter were superior to those sent to India for the use of the Company.

But Mir Kasim's experience of the nobles of Murshidabad made him deeply suspicious of them all. His spies were everywhere so that men were frightened of visiting their friends and stayed in their own houses. This terror rose to such a height after a number of his officers had been put to death that his courtiers were in continual apprehension lest an unlucky word of their might arouse the Nawab's anger and even in their own homes their anxiety would not allow them to sleep peacefully at night.<sup>195</sup>

The relations between Mir Kasim and the English were bad from the start. Those members of the Council who had opposed his elevation never ceased to regard him with hostility in spite of all the efforts of Vansittart and Warren Hastings to bring about a better state of feeling. In the middle of 1762 a letter arrived in Bengal from the Court of Directors which referred in very guarded terms to the recent revolution. The opposition party took it to mean that the Directors disapproved of the revolution, published the letter throughout the province and declared that the next step would be the restoration of Mir Jafar.<sup>196</sup>

Warren Hastings was able to remove the Nawab's fears on this point but neither Vansittart nor he was able to settle the serious disputes which arose, hampered as they were by the violent opposition of their own colleagues. The state of Bengal at this time may be linked to that of the land of Canaan when, the ancient Book records, there was no king in Israel and every man did that which was right in his own eyes. The Company's dustucks or permits to carry on trade in Bengal custom free were shamefully abused. In former times they had only been

194. *Seir Mutaqherin*, Vol. II, p. 155.

195. *Seir Mutaqherin*, Vol. II, pp. 192, 193.

196. Vansittart's Narrative, Vol. II, pp. 67, 68.

used to protect the sea-borne trade but now they were used to cover salt, betel, tobacco and other articles of inland trade and the Nawab's revenues suffered accordingly. Not only that but every Bengali agent and underling of the Company's servants acted towards the inhabitants of the country as if they were armed with the whole might of the British nation. Complaints began to pour in upon the Governor. One of the last of these was received from Jagat Seth to whom Vansittart sent the following reply on the 10th March, 1763:—"I have had the pleasure of receiving your letter wherein you write that the inhabitants of the village of Balygoculpore, which is a Talook you have purchased, are all run away on account of the violence committed by the people belonging to the English boats which bring to there, and that I should give strict orders concerning that affair. As the strictest orders have been given that no dependant of the English should on any account injure or oppress the Ryots, and I am by no means inclined to allow of such proceedings, and as I have the same regard for your business as my own, I therefore desire if any one is guilty of any violences or oppressions, that you will inform me of his name, together with all particulars, that I may put a stop to such doings."<sup>197</sup>

The letter meant nothing for, in truth, Vansittart had long before learnt that he was helpless in such matters. When he cautioned the Company's servants whose agents were concerned in these disorders they paid no attention to him. When he brought the complaints before the Council he was told they were only pretexts of the Nawab for quarrelling with them or for encroaching upon their rights. He found that the only result of his interference was that he made those interested his personal enemies. "In short", he says, "though the complaints became every day more frequent, yet not one was ever redressed, nor even thought worthy of an enquiry; and all that I could do was, by palliating what I could not remedy, to keep the Nabob in temper, and prevent an open quarrel from breaking out between us."<sup>198</sup>

An attempt made by Vansittart to end the dispute only

<sup>197</sup>. Long's Selections from Unpublished Records, p. 347.

<sup>198</sup>. Vansittart's Narrative, Vol. II, pp. 109, 110.

made matters worse. He went to Monghyr, which the Nawab had made his residence in preference to Murshidabad, and drew up a number of regulations for the conduct of trade by the Company's servants. These were, however, regarded with the greatest hostility by a majority of the Council and Mir Kasim who could not, or would not understand Vansittart's relation to his Council, was still further exasperated. At length, in March 1763, the Nawab issued an order abolishing all tolls and customs for the space of two years and the Council, declaring that this was an infringement of his engagement with the Company sent Messrs. Amyatt and Hay to demand the annulment of the order. Matters were hastening towards a rupture and the Seths were involved in the dispute as the following extract from the Seir Mutaqherin will show:—

“The Nawab, sensible of the opposition formed against him at Calcutta, and anxious to take every precaution necessary in a dispute of so much consequence, had harboured this long while heavy suspicions against the two Djagat-seats ; nor did he think it consonant to the rules of prudence to leave two such men in Moorshoodabad at such a critical conjuncture. He remembered that they had been deeply concerned, both by their money and influence in transferring the supreme power from Seradj-ed-doulah to Mir-djaaferqhan, and lately from Mir-djaafer-qhan to himself ; and, being a great connoisseur in men's tempers, as well as an enquirer into their characters, he dreaded the consequences of two such men remaining at Moorshoodabad, and so near Calcutta, at a time when his disputes with the English ran higher and higher and his difficulties with them were encreasing daily upon his hands. He therefore thought it incumbent upon him to have both of them these brothers in his power, at least ; and, as he knew that so far from moving a foot on his sending them letters or orders, they would from that very moment apprehend for their safety, and contrive to escape to Calcutta, where they would prove of infinite service to his opposers, by their wealth, intrigues, and influence ;—he therefore wrote to Mahmed-taky-qhan, who commanded in Birbouom, a man of an acknowledged bravery, and a sincere fidelity, requiring him to repair in all speed to Moorshoodabad, where he was to surround the house of the Djagat-seats in such a manner as that not a man might come out, and then to wait

until Marcar, the Armenian, might arrive and bring him a letter ; on the persual of which, he was to deliver the two Seats in his hands, taking a receipt in form for the delivery of their persons. After writing the above order, he dispatched Marcar, an Armenian General, of Gurghin-qhan's recommendation, and putting three or four regiments of Tallingas under his command, he ordered him to repair by water to Moorshoodabad, where he was to receive from Mahmed-taky-qhan the two Djagatseats, and to bring them in all speed to Monghyr, but without departing from a proper regard and attention to their persons and rank. Mahmed-taky-qhan, on receipt of the order, repaired in all speed to Moorshoodabad, where he closely surrounded the house of the two Djagat-seats, sending them word at the same time, "That he had no injury to offer either to their persons, fortune, honour, or family ; his orders were only to send them to Monghyr, where the Nawab wanted to see them beside near his person ; and that he requested them to make themselves thoroughly easy on his own particular subject, as he had no harm to offer." The two brothers, finding themselves reduced to the single party of submission, prepared for their journey. In three days more Marcar, the Armenian, arrived with his Tallingas, and the two brothers being delivered up to him, were carried to Monghyr. The Nawab received them with distinction, spoke to them with kindness, deplored the necessity of his affairs, soothed their minds, excused the rigour of his proceedings, and requested their living at Monghyr, where he hoped they would build lodgings for themselves, set up a banking-house, as they had at Moorshoodabad, attend at his court, as they did formerly, and, as formerly, transact business in the affairs of government and finance. He, at the same time, set them at full liberty, but people were secretly set upon them, with orders not to suffer them to go out to any great distance. The poor brothers were fain to order a banking-house to be raised for their lodgings, and found themselves obliged to accommodate themselves to the perfidy exercised on them."

It was just at this time that Amyatt and Hay arrived at Cassimbazar on their way to Monghyr and the former immediately reported the news of the carrying off of the Seths to the Governor. Vansittart concluded that the Seths had been treated in this manner on account of their connection with the

English and on the 24th April, 1763, sent the following letter of remonstrance to the Nawab:—"I am just informed by a letter from Mr. Amyatt that Mahomed Tuckee Khan having marched with his army from Beerbhoom to Herageel went on the 21st instant at night to the house of Juggut Sett and Maharaja Siroop Chand, and carried them from their own house to Herageel, where he keeps them under a guard.

"This affair surprises me greatly; when your Excellency took the Government upon yourself, you and I and the Setts being assembled together, it was agreed that as they are men of high rank in the country, you shall make use of their assistance in managing your affairs and never consent that they should be injured; and when I had the pleasure of seeing you at Monghyr I then likewise spoke to you about them, and you set my heart at ease by assuring me that you would on no account do them any injury. The taking of men of their rank in such an injurious manner out of their home is extremely improper and is disgracing them in the highest degree; it is moreover a violation of our agreement, and therefore reflects dishonour upon you and me, and will be a means of acquiring us in ill name from everybody. The abovementioned Gentlemen were never thus disgraced in the time of any former Nazims."

So the letter ends in Long's "Unpublished Records"<sup>199</sup> but it is plain from the Nawab's reply that the Governor ended his letter with a demand for the Seth's release. The Nawab's reply is dated the 2nd May. After repeating practically the whole of Vansittart's letter Nawab proceeds: "In the affair of the Setts no person has to this time ever wrote any thing, nor spoken to me concerning them.

"Now that you write to me, with all these specious pretences, it is as manifest as the sun, that under the government of every Nazim of Bengal till now, Omichund (for instance) and every dependent of the English and these gentlemen too, attended on the Nazim, and assisted in the affairs of the sircar, at the same time that they carried on their mercantile concerns. God be praised, that you yourself write

that I said, "these gentlemen are of consequence, it is proper to carry on my affairs with their intervention." For these three years that I have borne this burthen, and have repeatedly wrote to these gentlemen, to carry on their own business, and assist in the affairs of the Nizamut, they paid not the least regard to my summons, and have put a stop to all their mercantile business, and have done all they could, to throw the affairs of the Nizamut into confusion, and treated me as an enemy, and out-law, and refused to come. Now that I have sent my people, and brought them hither, it was not because they were intriguing with the English, but for the management of such of my affairs, as indispensably required it. Since the beginning, this was agreed upon between us, that these gentlemen, etc., should always attend upon the Nazim, and carry on both the business of the Nizamut, and their own. As to your writing to me in this manner, and knitting your brows without reason, and treating the covenants and treaties which are between us, like children's play, breaking entirely through them, as if you had not any kind of regard to them; what other construction can I devise for this? Whilst your people drag and carry away my aumils, and keep them in confinement; in this unjustifiable insolence of your people, which is oversetting the treaty between us, there is no diminution of character, no breach of faith, nor cause of reproach between us, neither is any violation of the treaty in this. But when I summon a man, who is my own dependent, the treaty is broke, and my administration becomes weak, and my name suffers in the sight of every one, but particularly in yours. O gracious God! this is a matter of astonishment, which my understanding cannot reach. In a word, that these gentlemen, from the first day, swore and agreed, that "wherever my life was, their life was, and wherever my business was, their business was." God be praised, that this is a fact known to all the world. Now I have brought them to this place, that they may always be with me and attend to my business and their own, according to custom. I know not, whether what you write in behalf of these gentlemen, be by way of intercession for them, or whether their names are included in our former treaty, which you have recourse to, when you charge me with breach of faith, and violation of former



agreements, and reproach me with weakness, and a bad name. God be praised, that I have sent for them with no other design than for the currency of business, and for their continuance in one place neither, as in the case of Coja Wajeed, have I seized any person unjustly, nor charged my conscience with the unjust death of any man. If you are resolved to put misconstructions on every proper and lawful action of mine, I am utterly without remedy; but if you regard equity, this matter is not of such consequence, as to give occasion for so much contention and reproach.

In the Nabob's Hand-writing.

Sir, Though it is agreed by the treaty between us, that I should never say anything in behalf of the servants and dependents of the Company, nor you, gentlemen, interfere in behalf of the servants and dependents of the Company, nor you, gentlemen, interfere in behalf of the servants and dependents of the Nizamut ; yet you, gentlemen, have regarded all this as utterly obliterated, and in contradiction thereto persist in the violation of the treaty, and desire to raise your name, and establish your own customs. I am remediless.<sup>200</sup>

Messrs. Amyatt and Hay arrived at Monghyr in the middle of May and presented their demands to the Nawab. One of these demands was the release of the Seths but the Nawab hardened his heart and would not let them go. In other respects, too, the result of the deputation was unsatisfactory and events soon occurred which made war inevitable. A boat carrying arms to the English at Patna was seized by the Nawab as it was passing Monghyr. Mr. Ellis, the Chief of the factory at Patna, an inveterate enemy of the Nawab, took possession of the city and though this was soon recaptured the news had driven the Nawab to frenzy. Amyatt, who had left Monghyr to return to Calcutta, was murdered near Murshidabad with all his attendants. The English re-instated Mir Jafar as Nawab and marched on Murshidabad. A battle placed the city in their hands and two more battles drove Mir Kasim from Monghyr. Mir Kasim, driven to madness by these defeats, vented his desire for blood on the helpless prisoners in his hands and among

the victims were Jagat Seth Mahtab Rai and Maharaja Swarup Chand.

The usual account of the death of the Seths is that they were thrown into the Ganges from a tower in the fort of Monghyr. It is related, too, that Jagat Seth Mahtab Rai had a favourite servant, named Chuni, who entreated the executioners to put him to death with his master. The executioners refused his request, his master supplicated him to give up the idea, but he was resolute in his determination not to survive his master and threw himself into the river after Jagat Seth. Ten thousand boatmen, says the translator of the *Seir Mutaqherin*, passed every year, by the walls of Monghyr and there was not one of them who could not point to a certain tower of the fort of Monghyr as the scene of the tragic death of the Seths, every old woman in Monghyr knew by heart the speech of Chuni to the executioners of his master and yet it would seem that the death of the Seths did not take place at Monghyr at all. The *Seir Mutaqherin* says that Mir Kasim carried them with him in his retreat to Patna and that they were hacked to pieces by his soldiers near the town of Bar the day after the death of Gurgin Khan, or Coja Gregory, as the English called him. The *Riyazu-s-salatin* also mentions that the death of Jagat Seth occurred after that of Gurgin Khan while Major Adams, the commander of the English troops against Mir Kasim, wrote to the Council at Calcutta on the 18th October, 1763, "all accounts likewise agree . . . . that the Seaths were put to death near Baur and their bodies not permitted to be burnt, but exposed under a Guard of Sepoys."<sup>201</sup> Instances of faithfulness and gratitude are rare in the annals of this time and therefore it is to be hoped that the story of the devoted Chuni was founded on truth and only distorted in details by popular rumour.

The Seths were not unprepared for their fate. From the day that Siraj-ud-daula ascended the masnad they had been forced to walk warily, continually haunted with the dread that the Nawab would one day find an opportunity of seizing them and taking possession of their vast wealth. Hence it was that they employed a guard of 2,000 men which watched over the house where they and their families lived and accompanied them when

201. Long's Selection from Unpublished Records, p. 334.

they went on pilgrimage. At Murshidabad, according to Scrafton, it was an invariable rule never to suffer the two of them to go out at the same time nor did one ever take out his own children of the other.<sup>202</sup> In 1766, three years after the death of the two Seths Scrafton wrote:—"Jagatseat was a very great banker, whose ancestors had been established in Bengal and during the Power of the Mogul used to mediate between the Subhas and the court of Delhi, and remit the revenues: he was also mediator between many of the Rajahs and the Subah who was always highly respected and esteemed: and the late head of the house was supposed to be possessed of many millions sterling: his assistance and support were necessary to the strength and reputation of the Government, and our protection was necessary to him, to preserve him against the designs of the government on his wealth."<sup>203</sup> This protection, Scrafton asserted, was solemnly promised to Jagat Seth by Lord Clive<sup>204</sup> and he was indignant with Vansittart for the fatal blow, which by his failure to protect the Seths and Ram Narain, the Governor dealt to the national reputation which Clive had established by a strict adherence to every engagement he had entered into.<sup>205</sup> "Had the army taken the field", Scrafton maintained, "the moment Ramnarain was put in irons, or the Seats confined, the war had been much more justifiable than in the support of privileges, to which they had no right."<sup>206</sup>

202. Scrafton, *Observations on Mr. Vansittar's Narrative* (1766), p. 41.

203. *Ibid.* p. 2.

204. *Ibid.* p. 2. "We, in his (Nawab's) presence, promised the Company's protection to Juggutseat and Roydullub, for their lives and honour as long as they remained firm in their allegiance to their master."

205. *Ibid.* p. 44. "Lord Clive, by a strict adherence to every engagement he had entered into, had established such a national reputation, that I am convinced there was not a man in the three provinces, who would not have joined the English forces on a single letter: but the giving up the persons of Ramnarain and the Seats into the Subhah's power, had so totally changed their sentiments of us, that English faith was now as much detested as it was before respected: and although Mir Cossim fought several battles and in each drew nearer to his ruin, not a single man joined us to the last."

206. *Ibid.* p. 45.

## CHAPTER 4

### JAGAT SETH KHUSHAL CHAND AND MAHARAJA UDWAT CHUND

Jagat Seth Mahtab Rai left four sons—Khushal Chand, Gulab Chand, Sumer Chand and Sukhal Chand. The eldest, Seth Khushal Chand became the third Jagat Seth and was confirmed in the title by the Emperor Shah Alam in 1766, while each of the others received the title of Seth from the Emperor. Maharaja Swarup Chand left three sons, the eldest of whom, Seth Udwat Chand, inherited his father's title of Maharaja. It would appear that when Mir Kasim carried off their fathers to Monghyr, Khushal Chand and Udwat Chand had remained at Murshidabad and the victories of the English soon removed them from the clutches of Mir Kasim. Seth Gulab Chand, a brother of Khushal Chand and Babu Mahir Chand, a brother of Udwat Chand, were not so fortunate. They had been carried off to Monghyr with their fathers, and, though they escaped death, they were forced to accompany Mir Kasim on his wanderings until, at last they were handed over to the Emperor of Delhi and Vizier, the Nawab of Oudh. Mir Jafar wrote to the Vizier on their behalf from whom he received the following reply:—"I have had the pleasure to receive your two letters mentioning the arrival of the royal presents, and your desire that the Set's sons may be released, and I have represented in a proper manner to His Majesty the strength and firmness of your obedience. The high in station Raja Beny Bahadre will shortly arrive in the royal presence, and these matters will be settled and answers sent you."<sup>1</sup> The Nawab's intervention was successful but Jagat Seth and his cousin had to pay a heavy ransom before the captives were released.

Mir Jafar survived his re-instatement as Nawab of Bengal for about a year and a half. He died at the end of January, 1765. Mr. Vansittart had left India by this time and his place

1. Long's Selection from Unpublished Records, p. 355.

had been taken by Mr. Spencer, who had been sent to Bengal from Bombay but Clive had been appointed Governor again and was on his way out at the time of Mir Jafar's death. Miran, the eldest son of Mir Jafar, had left a young son but Spencer and the Council decided to pass him over and make Najim-ud-daula, the second son of Mir Jafar, Nawab of Bengal. For this they demanded and received presents amounting in all to nearly R140,000. This was all the more reprehensible because on the 24th January they had received positive orders from the Court of Directors that all servants and persons in the Company's service should sign covenants binding them not to accept, directly or indirectly, from Indian princes, any grant of land, rents or territorial dominion, or any present whatever exceeding the value of four thousand rupees, without the consent of the Court of Directors.<sup>2</sup> This order was quietly shelved and the proceedings of the Council were thus reported to the Court of Directors by Clive:—

“The opportunity of acquiring immense fortunes was too inviting to be neglected, and the temptation too powerful to be resisted. A treaty was hastily drawn up by the Board, or rather transcribed, with a few unimportant additions from that concluded with Meer Jaffir, and a deputation consisting of Messrs. Johnstone, Senior, Middleton and Leycester appointed to raise the natural son of the deceased Nabob to the Subahdarry, in prejudice of the claim of the grandson, and for this measure such reasons are assigned as ought to have dictated a diametrically opposite resolution. Meeran's son was a minor, which circumstance alone would naturally have brought the whole administration into our hands, at a juncture when it became indispensably necessary we should realize that shadow of power and influence, which having no solid foundation was exposed to the danger of being annihilated by the first stroke of adverse fortune. But this inconsistency was not regarded, nor was it material to the views for precipitating the treaty, which was pressed on the young Nabob at the first interview in so earnest and indelicate a manner as highly disgusted him and chagrined his ministers; whilst not a single rupee was stipulated for the Company, and their interests were

2. Malcolm's *Life of Clive*, Vol. II, p. 330 (note).

sacrificed that their servants might revel in the spoils of a Treasury before impoverished but now totally exhausted.”<sup>3</sup>

Such proceedings upon the part of members of the Council were now put a stop to for ever. Clive arrived in Bengal on the 3rd May 1765 and took charge of the government. On the 6th he assembled the Council. The Company's instructions were read and the names of the members who had been appointed to form a Select Committee to assist Clive in restoring order to the Company's affairs. The members of Council would have liked to dispute the powers of the Committee and the meaning of the general letter from the Court of Directors but they soon found that they had not a Vansittart to deal with. Mr. Leycester was told that no discussion on such a question would be allowed but he could record his dissent on the face of the consultations. Mr. Johnstone was asked whether he dared to dispute the Committee's authority and when he replied that he had not the least intention of doing such a thing “there was an appearance of very long and pale countenances, and not one of the Council uttered another syllable.”<sup>4</sup>

A few days after the arrival of Clive in India the Nawab paid him and the members of the Committee a visit in the course of which he gave a letter “filled with bitter complaints of the insults and indignities he had been exposed to, and of the embezzlement of near 20 Lacs of Rupees issued from his Treasury for purpose unknown during the late negotiations.” “So public a complaint,” wrote Clive, “could not be disregarded, and it soon produced an enquiry.”<sup>5</sup> The Select Committee met on the 1st June and took this letter into their consideration upon which they resolved that “that Mahomed Reza Cawn, since the Death of the late Nabob, has distributed among certain Persons, near Twenty Lacks of Rupees—and that it is incumbent upon them to discover to whom such Sums have been paid, and for what Consideration : In order that the most effectual Measures may be pursued, to remedy for the present, and to prevent for the future any dangerous Consequences which

3. Long's Selections from Unpublished Records, p. 422.

4. Clive to General Carnac, 6th May, 1765, (Malcolm's Life Clive, Vol. II, p. 320). Clive to Palk, 11th May, (Malcolm's Life of Clive, Vol. II, p. 324).

5. Long's Unpublished Records, p. 422.

may have arisen, or which may arise, not only to the Country Government, but likewise to the Company, from such Practices.”<sup>6</sup>

On the 6th June Muhammad Reza Khan, the Nawab's deputy, was called upon to account for the large disbursements he had made from the treasury and delivered to the Committee what Clive calls a “most extraordinary narrative” in which “he specifies the several names, the sums by whom paid and to whom, whether in bills, cash or obligations. So precise, so accurate an account as this of money issued for secret and venal services, was never, we believe, before this period exhibited to the Hon'ble Court of Directors, at least never vouched by such undeniable testimony and authentic documents ; by Juggut Seat who himself was obliged to contribute largely to the sums demanded ; by Mootyram who was employed by Mr. Johnstone in all these pecuniary transactions ; by the Nawab and Mahomed Reza Khan who were the heaviest sufferers ; and lastly by the confession of the Gentlemen themselves, whose names are specified in the distribution list.”<sup>7</sup>

Jagat Seth Khushal Chand, who had complained that sums of money had been unduly obtained from him by the deputation sent to Murshidabad, also appeared at this meeting of the Committee and submitted a narrative on the subject of his complaint. When examining him on this Lord Clive desired him to be most attentive to adhere to the truth whereupon Jagat Seth replied with warmth that he had put his seal to the narrative “and that that would go for a Crore of Rupees.”<sup>8</sup> The narrative of Jagat Seth ran thus :—“When Mr. Johnstone and other gentlemen of Council went to Moorshedabad, and applied themselves to the Regulation of the whole Subahdarry, they sent me the following Message by Mootyram :—“Make us some Acknowledgement, and we will settle all your Business according to your Heart's Desire, otherwise we shall be displeased, and your Business meet with no Assistance for you formerly made an Acknowledgment to Lord Clive and other Gentlemen.” I informed them that Lord Clive never said a Word on this

6. Third Report of Select Committee of House of Commons, p. 315.

7. Long's Selections from Unpublished Records, p. 422.

8. General Carnac's Evidence. Third Report of Select Committee of House of Commons, p. 321.

subject, and that I did not give him even a single Daum. They sent me a Message in Answer as follows :—"You may not be acquainted with it, but your Fathers made an Acknowledgement; give us Five Laaks of Rupees." I answered, "Our Fathers never did give Lord Clive a single Daum." They replied, "If you would wish to have your Business go freely on, make us some Acknowledgment.' Being remediless, I consented to give 125,000 Rupees; 50,000 immediately, and the rest when I could collect in my debts from the Country. The Gentlemen agreed to this and accordingly I sent them 50,000 Rupees by my Muttasuddies and Mootyram: In fine, there were none of my debts collected in when Mr. Johnstone, etc., returned to Calcutta: and I also came to Calcutta to pay my Respects to Lord Clive: so that thus the affair rested. Enquiry having been made of me, I have written these Particulars, in which there is by no means a Word of Untruth.

Written the 15th of Zechidja of  
the 6th Year, 5th June, 1765.

A True Translation.  
George Vansittart  
Persian Translator.<sup>9</sup>

On the 7th and 8th Mooteram, Governor of Hugli, was examined by the Committee in the presence of Jagat Seth and Muhammad Reza Khan, in order to determine whether he had been authorised to demand money of the Seths or "whether he presumed to prostitute the Character of the Gentlemen of the Deputation by making use of their names without the sanction of their express authority."<sup>10</sup>

His examination was as follows:—

Q. Did you go to Juggut Seet to demand money?

A. I did.

Q. Who sent you to Juggut Seet?

A. Mahomed Reza Cawn sent Ismael Ally Cawn with me to Juggut Seet.

Q. Who sent you to Mahomed Reza Cawn?

A. Mr. Johnstone.

9. Third Report of Select Committee of House of Commons, p. 414.

10 Ibid.



Q. What Message did you carry from Mr. Johnstone to Mahomed Reza Cawn?

A. I was ordered to desire him to ask the Seets for presents.

Q. Did any of the other Gentlemen join in this message to Mahomed Reza Cawn?

A. I had my Order from Mr. Johnstone only.

Q. Did Mr. Johnstone send you in his own Name, or in that of the Deputation?

A. He sent me in his own, and in the names of Messieurs Senior, Leycester and Middleton.

Q. What passed when you went to Mahomed Reza Cawn : did you ask him for Money from the Seets?

A. I did, I asked him for Three Laacks.

Q. What Day did you go to Mahomed Reza Cawn?

A. I cannot say for certain, but the Affair was about Twenty Days in settling.

Q. Can't you determine within a Day or Two of the Time you first mention?

A. I cannot, but it was about the Twenty-first of Rumzaun.

Q. What Answer had you from Mahomed Reza Cawn when you desired he would make this Demand on the Seets?

A. He first said, "Very well, I'll try what I can do ; but on my application, he said, "It was very improper to ask Money of the Seets—it will get me a bad Name."

Q. Do you confess the Contents of Juggut Seet's Letter to be true?

A. I do.

Q. What did you say to Mahomed Reza Cawn about stopping the Business of the Seets unless they complied with the Demand?

A. I did tell him, that the Gentlemen would protect their Business, if they would make a Present ; if not, the Business of the Seets would meet with no Protection or Countenance.

Q. You say that Ismael Ally Cawn was sent with you to the Seets ; what passed there?

A. When Ismael Ally Cawn demanded Three Laaks of Rupees for the Gentlemen Juggut Seet answered, "If the Gentlemen will be satisfied with Rings, Jewels, and such Presents, from Ten to Twenty-five thousand Rupees, I will comply." But on Ismael Ally Cawn's pressing him farther, he

agreed to give 50,000, which was not accepted ; and then Juggut Seet said "Well, I will speak to Mahomed Reza Cawn myself."

Q. Who was present at all this Conversation ?

A. I was, but did not speak.

Q. Do you know how the Affair was settled ?

A. Yes, I heard that Juggut Seet afterwards consented to give 75,000 Rupees, then he rose to a Laak, and last consented to give 125,000. This I heard from Mahomed Reza Khan.

Juggut Seet being present at this Examination, was asked, "If he ever communicated the Conversation between him and Mootyram, as set forth in his Letter?" He answered, "Yes, to my Brother, to Brigauloul my Mounshy and to Chiskimull my Vakeel."

Q. Did you demand the Money of the Seets in your own Name, or on the Gentlemen's Account ?

A. I demanded it on Account of the Gentlemen surely and those that sent me.

Q. When the Money was sent by Juggut Seet to M. R. Cawn's House, did he forward it immediately to Mr. Johnstone at Mootyhill in a Stackeree, and was Mr. Johnstone angry ?

A. He did forward it to Mootyhill in a Stackeree, with which Mr. Johnstone was angry, and said, "Why was not the Money given to Mootyram, or sent more privately."

Q. You are charged by Jagat Seet with having visited him Thrice, once when he was alone, once in presence of Ismael Ally Cawn, and once when his Brother was with him. Is this true ?

A. It is true, I did visit him Thrice.

Q. Had you any Conversation with him about the Demand in any of these Visits ?

A. I had I must confess. At the time I visited Juggut Seet when he was alone, he told me he would agree to give 75,000 Rupees to the Gentlemen, and desired I would represent to them that his Circumstances would not afford more, which I promised to do.

..... 11

Q. Was it of your own Accord, or was you ordered to tell

Mahomed Reza Cawn, that if the Seets complied with their Demand, their Business should be protected, otherwise it would have no Countenance or Encouragement?

A. I was ordered by Mr. Johnstone.

Q. Is this Evidence which you give true in every Circumstance, according to the best of your Judgement?

A. It is, and I never will retract it ; but if there should appear any Thing contradictory or unsatisfactory at first, it was owing to the Confusion I was under when brought before this Company.<sup>12</sup>

On the 18th June Mooteram attended a meeting of the whole Council. The evidence he had given to the Select Committee was read to him and he confirmed the whole of it except in the following particulars.

“To the first question, he now said, that he did go to Juggut Seet, by Mahomed Reza Cawn’s orders, with Ishmael Aly Cawn, but not to ask for Money.

To the Question, What did you say to Mahomed Reza Cawn about stopping the Business of the Seets, unless they complied with the Demand? he answered the same Purport as to the Committee, but made use only of the Term, *Cootch Boolega ny*, for what is rendered by the Committee, Meeting with no Protection or Countenance, whereupon the Committee observed, that he indifferently and repeatedly made use of both the Expressions *Cootch Syeur riga Ny* and *Boolega Ny*.

In his Answer to the subsequent Question, he now differed, saying, that Juggut Seet made no Offer of Rings or Jewels, but told them only, that as far as Twenty or Five and Twenty Thousand Rupees he would comply : that Ishmael Aly Cawn then said, that would not do : and Juggut Seet replied, that he would then speak to Mahomed Reza Cawn himself : and that when he went to him, he proposed the Sum of 50,000 Rupees.

To the Question, Was it of your own Accord, or was you ordered to tell Mahomed Reza Cawn that if the Seets complied with the Demand, their Business should be protected, otherwise it would have no Countenance or Encouragement? he

12. The signature of Clive, W. B. Sumner, H. Verelst and Fra. Sykes are appended to this examination. Third Report of Select Committee of House of Commons, pp. 415, 416.

confirmed his Answer to the Committee, using only the same Expression already remarked.

The Examination having been concluded, Mr. Leycester desired the following Question might be put to Mootyram : If when Mr. Johnstone related to him the Reasons why he thought the Seets might make Presents, whether he ordered him to mention them to Mahomed Reza Cawn and to desire Mahomed Reza Cawn would urge them to the Seets? which being put to him accordingly, he replied, That Mr. Johnstone did tell him to express himself to Mahomed Reza Cawn in the same terms which Mr. Johnstone did to him.

Mr. Leycester, in addition to the several Minutes already entered in Vindication of his Conduct. . . . desired further to take the following oath, which was accordingly administered to him by the President : viz.

I swear that I am totally ignorant of the Messages said to be delivered by Mootyram to the Seets. So help me God.

(Signed) Ralph Leycester.<sup>13</sup>

Three questions arise with regard to this case. The first is this. Did the members of the Council receive these sums of money from the Nawab Mahomed Reza Khan and Jagat Seth? There is no doubt about the answer to this question. The members of Council acknowledge that they had received the presents and even tried to justify their conduct in this matter.

But were the presents freely given or extracted from the Nawab and Muhammad Reza Khan by pressure and extorted from Jagat Seth by menaces? The final judgment of the Select Committee on this point which was sent home to the Court of Directors was as follows :—“Juggut Seat expressly declares in his narrative, that the sum he agreed to pay the deputation, amounting to Rs. 1,25,000 was extorted by menaces, and since the close of our enquiry and the opinions we delivered in the proceedings of the 21st June, it fully appears that the presents from the Nabob and Mahomed Reza Khan exceeding the immense sum of 17 Lacs, were not the voluntary offerings of gratitude, but contributions levied on the weakness of the

13. Consultation, Fort William, 18th June, 1765. Third Report of Select Committee of House of Commons, p. 438.

Government, and violently exacted from the dependant state and timid disposition of the Minister."<sup>14</sup> It will be noticed that the Committee express no opinion on the narrative of Jagat Seth but leave us to infer that Jagat Seth's statement had been convincing to them. And this would be a correct inference. Mr. Sumner, a member of the Select Committee, afterwards altered his views with reference to the presents made by the Nawab and Muhammad Reza Khan and stated in his evidence before the Select Committee of the House of Commons that he thought they had been freely and voluntarily given but he declared that the evidence with respect to Jagat Seth remained unanswered.<sup>15</sup> General Carnac, in his evidence before the same Committee, stated that the Seths were not in the habit of making presents and he could remember no instance of their having done so before this period.<sup>16</sup> Mr. Leycester returned his present to Jagat Seth as soon as he heard that Jagat Seth had not given it with his free will and consent. General Carnac was at Murshidabad at the time and Jagat Seth, at a loss what to do in the matter, applied to him for advice. The General's advice was that if he had given the present willingly he should allow Mr. Leycester to keep it but if not he should receive it back. Jagat Seth received it back and asked General Carnac whether he supposed any other member of the deputation would follow Mr. Leycester's example.<sup>17</sup> Undoubtedly then the presents were extorted from Jagat Seth by means of menaces.

The third question is, who was responsible for the use of these menaces? After hearing the evidence of Mootyram and reading the statements of the members of the deputation of the Council who went to Murshidabad the Select Committee unanimously decided that Messrs. Senior, Middleton and Leycester were not concerned in the menaces used by Mootyram while with respect to Mr. Johnstone they said "he appears, from the evidence entered in our Proceedings, to have been a principal agent and manager in obtaining and distributing the

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14. Long's Selections from Unpublished Records, p. 422.

15. Third Report of Select Committee of House of Commons,

16. Ibid. p. 319.

p. 317.

17. Ibid. p. 321.

presents, but unacquainted, they would willingly suppose, with the menaces used by Mootyram, in his name, to Mahomed Reza Cawn and Juggut Sett, in order to extort a sum of money, from the latter, for the use of the deputation"<sup>18</sup> and echoing that hope we may leave the matter.

One curious fact is disclosed by the records of this case. A large part of the present made by the Nawab was paid by means of bills. One for Rs. 50,000 was drawn on "Seet Manan Chund and Annan Chund" while another, for a like amount was drawn on Juggut Seet Futter Chund and Seet Anan Chund at Hooghly."<sup>19</sup> Both were in favour of Mootyram and payable at ten days' sight. Now all the bills used for the payment of the presents with the exception of two drawn on a banker of Murshidabad named Mootychund and one on a banker unnamed at Dacca, were drawn on the house of Jagat Seth. "Seet Manan Chund and Annan Chund" is therefore the house of Jagat Seth and Manan is a mistake for Manik Chand. The incident shows that as late as the year 1765 the names of Manik Chand and Fateh Chand were still used to designate the house of Jagat Seth.

On the 25th June Clive proceeded to Murshidabad in order to make an agreement with the Nawab by which the power of the Company might be placed upon a solid foundation. By this agreement the defence of the province was placed entirely in the hands of the Company and to support the army necessary for this purpose and also to pay the large sums still due to the Company as restitution for the losses it had suffered and to pay the tribute to the Emperor, all the revenues of the province were handed over to the Company with the exception of 53 lakhs or £600,000, which was reserved to the Nawab for the expenses of his court and the administration of justice. Clive states that the young Nawab was delighted with an arrangement which placed a sum of money at his own will and pleasure and the only reflection he made when Clive left was, "Thank God! I shall now have as many dancing girls as I please."<sup>20</sup> At the same time the administration of the affairs of the three

18. Third Report of Select Committee of House of Commons, p. 313.

19. Ibid. p. 414.

20. Clive to Verelst, (Malcolm's Life of Clive, Vol. III, p. 125).

provinces was entrusted to a board of ministers consisting of Muhammad Reza Khan, Rai Durlabh Ram and Jagat Seth, for whose guidance Clive drew up the following paper :—

*Regulations for the Provinces of Bengal, Bahar, and Orissa*  
The Nabob Nudjum-ul-Dowlah, Meer Nudjum-ul-Deen, Ally Cawn Bahadre, *Nazim*.

The Nabob Maeen-ul-Doulah Syed Mahomed Reza Cawn Bahadre, *Nayb*. Mharaja Doolabram Br., *Dewann*.

Juggut Seet Cooshaul-chund and Mharaja Odweichund, *Chiefs of Trade*.

The appointing and displacing of the Fougders, Aumils, and other Officers of the Nizamut, and the Regulations of the whole Business of the Revenues and the Country under his Excellency, shall be managed by the Nabob Maeen-ul-Dowlah Br. Maharaja Doolabram Br. and the Seths and his Excellency shall consent thereto.

If any One be oppressed, his Effects seized, or his Life endangered, the aforesaid Gentlemen shall use their Endeavours to put a Stop to such Proceedings, and if they suspect that it is not in their Power to put a Stop to them, they shall advise the Governor with all speed, that he may inform the Gentlemen of the Council or Committee of such Proceedings, and put a Stop to them.

After the necessary Expenses of Government have been provided for, if there be any Overplus, it shall be deposited in the public Treasury, under the Care of the aforesaid Gentlemen: and there shall be Three different Locks to the Door of the Treasury, and Three Keys: One to remain in the Possession of each of the aforesaid Gentlemen, that neither of them may be able to take out any Money without the Consent of the others.

Of these Three Gentlemen Maeen-ul-Dowlah Br. Maharaja Doolabram, and the Seets, if any one act contrary to the Opinion of the other Two, those two shall give Advice thereof to the Governor, that he may lay the matter before the Gentlemen of the Council or Committee and take proper Measures on the Occasion.

Such Number of Horse and Foot shall be kept up as the aforesaid Gentlemen shall judge necessary for the Business of

the Collections, and all needless and improper Expenses shall be reduced.

Let them remove from the Durbar all mischievous Men, deceitful and evil Counsellors, and not put it in their Power to make Disturbance.

Let not the aforeaid Gentlemen go to the Durbar without each other's Knowledge, nor attempt any Thing to each other's Prejudice.

For the Preservation of Friendship and Harmony, and the Care of the Nabob's Affairs, and the Company's Money, a Gentleman of Council, of Probity and Abilities shall be appointed to reside at the Capital, on the Part of the Company. A monthly Allowance shall be made him by the Government, proportionable to his Rank; and the Accounts of the Receipts and Expenses, for the Business of the Government etc., shall be laid before him monthly for his Perusal."<sup>21</sup>

An annual allowance was made to the three ministers. Muhammad Reza Khan had nine laks,<sup>22</sup> but the records consulted do not mention the allowance granted to Rai Durlabh Ram and the Seths. The Seths did not accept their appointment with any enthusiasm. They were by no means ambitious men, said General Carnac, and would gladly have dispensed with the share in the Government that was given them.<sup>23</sup> This plan of giving stability to the Nawab's government was also in danger of being subverted through the ambition of Rai Durlabh Ram and the excessive moderation or timidity of Muhammad Reza Khan so that Mr. Sykes, the Resident at Murshidabad, had to be instructed to keep a watchful eye over this minister and check every symptom he showed of aspiring to a greater share of the administration than had been allotted to him.<sup>24</sup> However in the treaty made in 1766 with the next Nawab, Seif-ud-daula, and in that of 1790 made with his successor, Mubarik-ud-daula, the same arrangement was continued.

On the 12th August, 1765, the Emperor Shah Alam made a

21. Third Report of Select Committee of House of Commons, pp. 421, 422.

22. Fourth Report from the Committee of Secrecy, p. 120.

23. First Report of Select Committee of House of Commons, p. 319.

24. Third Report of Select Committee of House of Commons, pp. 323, 427.



formal grant of the Diwani, or financial administration of Bengal, Behar and Orissa to the Company and Clive immediately appointed Jagat Seth Khushal Chand to be the Company's banker.

The fortunes of the Seths were now on the decline. As early as May 10th, 1765, they had written to Clive in the following strain:—"What shall we say or write or how sufficiently complain of our distressed situation? The tyrant Meer Cossim causelessly called our fathers from hence in the most disgraceful manner, treated them with such violence and oppression as perhaps never before happened to any one even in a dream or in imagination, and unjustly put them to death. All the effects they had with them he plundered, and our younger brothers Set Golaub Chund and Baboo Mehirchund he carried with him, delivered them into the hands of the Mutasadies of the Imperial Court in lieu of a very large sum of money. For a long time they were kept prisoners and used with the greatest severity, and at length a very large sum was extorted from them which they were obliged partly to borrow and partly to raise by pawning jewels, and they were then released. Part of this money we have paid off by coining or selling our household utensils and jewels, and we are now distressed and embarrassed to find out means for discharging the rest."<sup>25</sup>

We do not possess Clive's reply to this letter but, no doubt the reply was an encouraging one and we have seen that Clive showed his regard for the family by appointing Jagat Seth one of the Nawab's ministers and treasurer to the Company. On the 24th November we find him writing to Jagat Seth:—"You are not ignorant what attention and support I always showed to your father, and how cordially I have continued it to you and the remainder of the family. Reflect only upon the manner in which I received you and how constantly I have given you proofs of my regard. It cannot, therefore, but be matter of great concern to me to learn that you do not consider seriously what part you ought to act to establish your own credit and public interest. Instead of keeping up to the original intention and necessity of having the Treasury under 3 separate keys,

<sup>25</sup> Long's Selections from Unpublished Records, p. 416.

I find all the money has been lodged with your family in your house, and that you have been consenting at least to the farming of the Bengal province under the rents I am assured it will bear. I am informed also that you have been pressing the Zemindars to discharge their debts to your fathers at a time when they are 5 months in arrear to the Government. This is a step I can by no means approve of or allow. You are still a very rich House, but I greatly fear that tendency you seem to have to avarice will not only turn greatly to your disadvantage, but at the same time destroy that opinion I had of your inclination and disposition to promote the public good."<sup>26</sup>

In the same year we find that the Select Committee borrowed a lak and a half of rupees from Jagat Seth.<sup>27</sup> In April, 1766, Clive was again at Murshidabad. While there the Seths laid a claim before him for between fifty and sixty laks of rupees. Lord Clive in consultation with General Carnac and Mr. Sykes, decided that the Government were not responsible for 30 laks of this which had been lent to Mir Jafar for the support of the military officers of Mir Jafar but 21 laks had been lent to Mir Jafar for the support of his and the English army and they decided that this claim was just and reasonable. They recommended to the Council that this sum should be repaid, half by the Company and half by the Nawab, within the space of ten years.<sup>28</sup> On May 16th, 1768, the Court of Directors in sending their approval of this arrangement, added "family, who have suffered so much in our Cause, are peculiarly entitled to our Protection."<sup>29</sup>

Before Lord Clive left India in January, 1767, he is said to have offered Jagat Seth Khushal Chand a yearly pension of three laks of rupees which the latter declined. As Clive had said they were still a rich house and three laks of rupees might still be considered a comparatively insignificant sum by Jagat Seth Khushal Chand. There may have been signs that the years of plenty were coming to an end but if so, he paid no heed to them. We are told that his expenses amounted to a lak of rupees a month. In addition he made large donations

23. Long's Selections from Unpublished Records, p. 413.

27. Long's Selections from Unpublished Records, p. 461.

28. Long's Selections from Unpublished Records, p. 437.

29. Fourth Report from the Committee of Secrecy, p. 122.

to the Jain temples on the sacred hill of Parasnath in Hazaribagh. "The oldest and most celebrated temple there is thought to have been built by them. The image within bears a Sanscrit inscription, showing that they were placed there in 1768 by Shuogal Chand and Hosiyal Chand. This is the temple now maintained by the panchayat of Murshidabad merchants. In a temple on the slope of the hill the images all show by their inscriptions that they were consecrated in 1765 by Shuogal Chand Jagat Seth ; and each one of the many gumtis or petty shrines, which are scattered over the hill, purports to have been consecrated by the same man, who is apparently a brother of Khushal Chand. Another of the three chief temples is inscribed with the date 1816, and the name of Rup Chand Jagat Seth ; and this apparently is the only temple still kept up at the expense of the family. It is stated to be in connection with the Digambara sect of Jains, but it is universally acknowledged that the Seths themselves used to belong to the rival sect of Svetambaras."<sup>30</sup>

The lean years were heralded by the great famine of 1770, which carried off one-third of the peasants and ruined two-thirds of the old aristocracy of Lower Bengal.<sup>31</sup> Then the allowance which the Seths received as ministers of the Nawab was stopped and<sup>32</sup> and when, in 1772, Warren Hastings transferred the Government Treasury from Murshidabad to Calcutta the Seths ceased to be the bankers of the Company. Whether the prodigal expenditure of Khushal Chand exhausted the accumulated treasures of the family cannot be known for certainty. The story preserved in the family states that these were kept buried in the earth by Khushal Chand and that death came upon him with such suddenness that he was unable to disclose the secret of the hiding place. He died in 1783. His only son had died four years before him and after the death of this son he adopted Harakh Chand who succeeded him.

30 Hunter's Statistical Account of Bengal, IX p. 264.

31. Hunter, Annals of Rural Bengal, p. 56.

32. Fourth Report from the Committee of Secrecy, p. 120.

## CHAPTER 5

### CONCLUSION.

When Warren Hastings was on his last tour to Upper India previous to his departure for England we are told that he received a petition from Khushal Chand praying that he might be re-instated in his hereditary office of receiver and treasurer of the Government revenues and that the Governor-General replied "your father rendered very important services to the British Government and for its establishment in the East ; should it please God, on my return from my tour, your wishes shall be fulfilled." When he returned he found that Khushal Chand was dead and his adopted son Harakh Chand was a minor. The Governor General expressed great sorrow at the news of Khushal Chand's death and at once interested himself in behalf of Harakh Chand. He wrote to the Nawab Mubarak-ud-daula :—"Nawab Sahib of exalted rank and dignity, admirer of the brethren, may you live long.

"After expressing my earnest desire, which cannot be described in writing for the happiness of an interview with you, I bring to your kind notice that a robe of honour consisting of six pieces, an ornament that is worn on the turban, a turban set with jewels, a necklace of pearls, an ear-ring with pearls and a palanquin with frills have been sent by me, through Sir John Daly to the kind gentleman, Seth Harakh Chund Sahib. I hope your noble self will be pleased to confer on the said Seth the title of Jagat Seth, to give him a seal and to allow him the privilege of being looked upon with the esteem and respect that his family have received this long time."

The Nawab's reply, dated the 11th March, 1784, was as follows: "Your esteemed letter—intimating that a robe of honour consisting of six pieces, together with an ornament that is worn in the turban, a turban set with jewels, a necklace of pearls, an ear-ring and a palanquin with frills have been sent by your noble self to Seth Harakh Chand, through Sir John Daly, a gentleman kind and helpful to his sincere friends ; and that myself may confer on the said Seth the title of Jagat Seth,

may give him a seal and allow him the privilege of being looked upon with esteem and respect as his family has been for a long time—having reached here, afforded great pleasure to my heart gave me satisfaction in every way. May God spare your noble self—full of bounty, endowed with excellent qualities, incomparable in fulfilling the wishes of, and in doing favours to people high and low—to live long with safety and dignity.

As the said Seth has been honoured and exalted with the robe of honour I also have given him, as desired by you, the seal with the inscription Jagat Seth Harakh Chand engraved on it."<sup>1</sup>

Thus Harakh Chand was confirmed in the title of Jagat Seth without any reference to the Court at Delhi.

The translator of the Seir Mutaqherin states that during the course of the troubles that fell upon Bengal the property of the Seths had been made away with everywhere and he thus contrasts the circumstances of the family in the time of Harakh Chand with their wealth in the time of Jagat Seth Fateh Chand, "Will a Jagatseat now, after having been plundered by the Marhattas of full two Crores in Arcot Rupees only, give government the next six months bills of exchange for 50, 60 and a 100 lacks, payable at sight?—So far from that, Jagatseat has not been able to pay, but by instalments a bill of 140,000 rupees in 1787." Harakh Chand's pecuniary difficulties are said to have been removed by the inheritance of the fortune of an uncle, Gulab Chand.

Harakh Chand was the first of the family who abandoned the Jain religion and joined the sect of the Vaishnavs. He was childless and being extremely anxious to have a son he faithfully followed all the ceremonies enjoined by the Jain religion in such a case but with no result. At length a member of the Vaishnava sect advised him to propitiate Vishnu. He did so and obtained his desire. A son was born to him whom he named Indra Chand and three years afterwards another son was born who was named Vishnu Chand. Two years later he

1. Copies of the Persian originals of these letters were supplied to the writer by the kindness of Khondkar Fazal Rubbee Khan Bahadur, Diwan to the Nawab Bahadur of Murshidabad.

showed his gratitude by erecting the temple which has been described in a former chapter. Over the temple is an inscription in Sanskrit which has been translated thus :—“There was in the family of the Jagat Seths a scion named Sumer Chand, son of Mahtab Rai who was famous throughout the world and possessed wealth surpassing that of Kuvera. His son Harakh Chand was known for his great piety and excellence. He became the disciple of Ramanuja Das, an ascetic of the Vaishnava sect, who had come from the Vindhya Mountains and whose virtues shone resplendent like the moon. He consecrated this temple to the God Hari as a token of his gratitude to his preceptor in the year 1857 Samvat (1801 A.D.) May increased prayers be offered to the god at this place. Dated Monday the fifth day after the full moon in the month of Magh of the Samvat year 1857.”

A modern writer is wrong in his conjecture that Harakh Chand lost prestige among the Jains by his change of religion. He and his successors have been respected as much as before by the members of their old religion. In fact it is doubtful whether the members of this family ever renounced entirely their Jain religion. They continued to perform their funeral rites and marriage ceremonies in the manner in which they had been performed by their ancestors in Rajputana and as all the Oswals in the district of Murshidabad who remained Jains performed theirs. Not only so but they had their Jain gods ;\* they paid the expenses incurred for the worship of those gods and even worshipped them themselves and listened to the words of the sacred books of the Jains.

Harakh Chand died in 1814 and was succeeded by his son Indra Chand who became the fifth Jagat Seth. Nine years later he followed his father to the grave. His title of Jagat Seth was recognised by the British Government. His brother Vishnu Chand received the title of Seth from the Nawab Nazim Deler Jang.

Gobind Chand, the son of Indra Chand, was the sixth Jagat Seth. He is said to have dissipated the remaining wealth of his

\* Some were of gold, some of silver, some of rare stone, some studded with jewels. Lord Curzon who saw them in 1902 remarked that he had never seen such curious idols before (Note by head of family).

ancestors. The following letter will help us to understand this and at the same time will show that the British Government still remembered the importance which was once attached to the title of Jagat Seth. The letter is from the Secretary to the Government of India and is addressed to "Juggut Seith Gobind Chand."

My Esteemed Friend,

I have had the pleasure of receiving your letter returning your thanks for permission to use a carriage and four and soliciting some Troopers for the same and other matters.

In reply I am directed by His Honor the Governor-General to intimate to you that it is not usual to allow Troopers, and a Sunnod is considered unnecessary.

I am further directed to inform you that Government cannot interfere between you and His Highness the Nawab Nazim.

Whenever you wish to proceed to Lucknow, and to Gwalior and Hyderabad, for which of course you must previously obtain the sanction of the Ruling Authorities of those States, a Passport will be granted to you, but it is unusual and objectionable on such occasions as the present to grant Letters of Introduction to the Residents at the Courts to which you wish to proceed.

I remain,

With much consideration,

Your sincere Friend,

Council Chamber,

23rd March, 1835.

(Sgd.) W. H. MACNAGHTEN,

*Secretary to the Government.*

When Jagat Seth Gobind Chand found himself forced to sell the family jewels he applied to the British Government for help and was granted a pension of Rs. 1,200 a month. The letter from the Court of Directors to the Governor-General of India, sanctioning the pension, runs as follows:—

1. In your Political letter dated 18th January (No. 1) 1843 you transmit to us two petitions from the widow and son of the late Jagatseth Indra Chand of Murshidabad representing their fallen fortunes and praying for a provision.

2. The petitioners are the representatives of the family

and mercantile firm of Jagat Seth Mahtab Rao whose attachment to British interests and whose services to our Government in times when such services were peculiarly valuable are matter of History.

3. It does not appear that the present applicants have personally any peculiar claim upon us and the decline of the family seems to have been owing as much to mismanagement as to any unavoidable cause.

4. In acknowledgement however of the former merits of the House towards the British Government we acquiesce in your recommendation and that of Major-General Roper, the Agent at Murshidabad, for the grant of Rs. 1,200 per month to the present head of the family, Jagat Seth Gobind Chand. The family should be informed that the grant is for life only."

In 1844 Gobind Chand's cousin Seth Kissen Chand, the son of Seth Vishnu Chand, also applied for a provision. The Court of Directors, however, replied "When we granted a pension of Rs. 1,200 to Gobind Chand, it was with the intention of providing for the family and not for the individual and as it appears that Gobind Chand has no children we think he may reasonably be expected to set apart a portion of his stipend for the support of his cousin."<sup>3</sup> However Jagat Seth Gobind Chand continued to hold the pension entirely at his own disposal until towards the close of 1858 when the Lieutenant-Governor of Bengal, in spite of the earnest protests of the Governor-General's Agent at Murshidabad, directed that one-fourth of the pension should be appropriated to Seth Kissen Chand. This decision was rescinded the next year by the Secretary of State for India.<sup>4</sup>

• The estimation in which Jagat Seth Gobind Chand was held may be judged from the following fact. At the marriage of the Nawab Feredun Jah robes of honour were distributed to all the important people of Murshidabad the value of which varied with the rank of the recipient. No one received a robe of honour of higher value than that received by Jagat Seth Gobind.<sup>5</sup>

3. Despatch of the Court of Directors No. 42 of 1844 dated 6th November, 1844.

4. Despatch from the Secretary of State for India, No. 55, dated 8th November, 1859.

5. List in Record Office at Murshidabad.



Jagat Seth Gobind Chand died in 1864. Like many other members of the family he was childless but in his lifetime he had adopted a son, Seth Gopal Chand. The latter and Seth Kissen Chand made a joint application to Government in which they asked that Rs. 700 of his father's pension might be conferred on Seth Gopal Chand leaving Rs. 500 for Seth Kissen Chand. The result was that Government sanctioned a pension of Rs. 800 per mensem to Seth Kissen Chand on the understanding that it was for the support of himself and the rest of the family including the widow of the late Jagat Seth Gobind Chand. Seth Gopal Chand appealed against this decision, first to the Viceroy and then to the Secretary of State for India and in the end was offered Rs. 300 per mensem from the pension of Seth Kissen Chand. As the head of the family he felt it inconsistent with his position to accept such an arrangement. He died shortly after.

Seth Kissen Chand died in 1880. Meanwhile Jagat Sethani Pran Kumari, the widow of Jagat Seth Gobind Chand, had adopted a son named Golab Chand. The ceremony of adoption was performed according to the customs prevailing among the Oswals and in the family of the Seths and in accordance with the Hindu Sastras. Almost all the Oswals of the district were invited to be present on the occasion and after the ceremony Golab Chand was considered to be the true son of Jagat Seth Gobind Chand for Hindu law makes no distinction between an adopted son and one begotten. "It is difficult to impress Europeans with the importance of those sanctions which make the custom of adoption so peculiarly sacred. One may here be mentioned. In the Sanskrit the divine ancient language of India, the word for son is puttra, and Manu, the highest authority for Hindu institutions, says that a son is called puttra because he is the instrument and the only instrument, for delivering his father and fore-fathers from the dread hell named Put ; and though this derivation has no philological value, it explains better than anything that passion to have male issue, which is the characteristic of the Hindus, and that unutterable woe which oppress those who die without either. Among the objects for which a son is wanted by a Hindu is certainly the perpetuation of the family, but the prime function which a son is to fill is to offer cakes to the manes of ancestors and perform

those numerous religious ceremonies which are essential to their salvation. This function cannot be performed by any other relative however near, and in the case of Jagat Seth Gobind Chand there was no other relative who could fill it until the adoption of Golab Chand. But this function is filled by an adopted son as well as by a son of the body ; and neither by custom, nor by religion, nor by law is an adopted son in any way different from a son of the body.”<sup>6</sup> The legal aspect of the case has been given as follows ;—Her Majesty Queen Victoria, through Lord Canning in 1858, assured the native princes and all her Indian subjects that any succession which may be legitimate according to Hindu or Muhammadan Law shall be upheld and in accordance with that pronouncement the succession, the state and dignity of many adopted sons of native chiefs and zemindars have been recognised by Government. Lord Dalhousie, notwithstanding his policy of annexation, did not apply the principle of lapse in many cases of adopted sons amongst the chiefs of Marwar. In the family of Jagat Seth the validity and efficacy of the adoption of Jagat Seth Harakh Chand was recognised by the Government.

Hindu law makes no distinction between an adopted son and a son born of the body. (Maine’s Hindu Law, 7th Edition, pp. 214-216, and the authorities quoted therein).

Jagat Sethani Pran Kumari was granted a pension of Rs. 300 per mensem after the death of Seth Kissen Chand but when her adopted son approached manhood and was being recognised as the head of the house of Jagat Seth and the social leader of the Oswals, she again memorialised Government to increase her own pension or to grant a separate pension to her son. All her efforts were unavailing and so, too, were the efforts which Gobind Chand made on his own behalf after the death of Jagat Sethani Pran Kumari. This occurred in September 1891.

Jagat Seth Golab Chand was educated at the Nawab’s Madrassa at Murshidabad, an institution founded under the patronage of the Governor General of India and the Nawab Nazim of Bengal, for the education of the members of the

6. Extracted from a memorial made to the Secretary of State for India by Jagat Seth Golab Chand.

Nizammat family and the admission of Jagat Seth Golab Chand to the school kept up the traditional close connection of the family of Jagat Seth with the Nawab of Bengal. Golab Chand was a very pious, simple-hearted man and a staunch Jain. He had four sons and one daughter. Two of his sons, Jagat Seth Fateh Chand and Seth Udai Chand survived him. He died on the 8th April, 1912, at Calcutta.

Jagat Seth Golab Chand was honoured with a visit from the Viceroy, Lord Curzon, on the 1st March, 1902 which was thus described in the page of "the Englishman" of the 3rd March :

"His Excellency the Viceroy and suite visited the dwelling-house of Jagat Seth at Mahimapur on his way back to Azimganj at about 2-30 P.M. to day. On arrival at the gate the Commissioner of the Presidency Division alighted from his state carriage and introduced Jagat Seth and walked into the enclosure. His Excellency carefully inspected the ruins of the old Jain temple consisting of detached columns and arches made of granite being specimens of Jaina Buddhistic sculpture, and was greatly interested. He then proceeded to the Hindu temple made of China bricks in 1801. The Viceroy next inspected the family documents, consisting of firmans granted by the Emperors of Delhi to the ancestor of the present Jagat Seth and rare gold and silver coins from the 15th century downward, as also some jewels and a valuable idol. When leaving, a nuzzur of ten gold mohurs was offered, which His Excellency touched and returned. A garland of gold lace was then presented and was kindly accepted. His Excellency in honouring Jagat Seth has honoured the whole Oswal community."

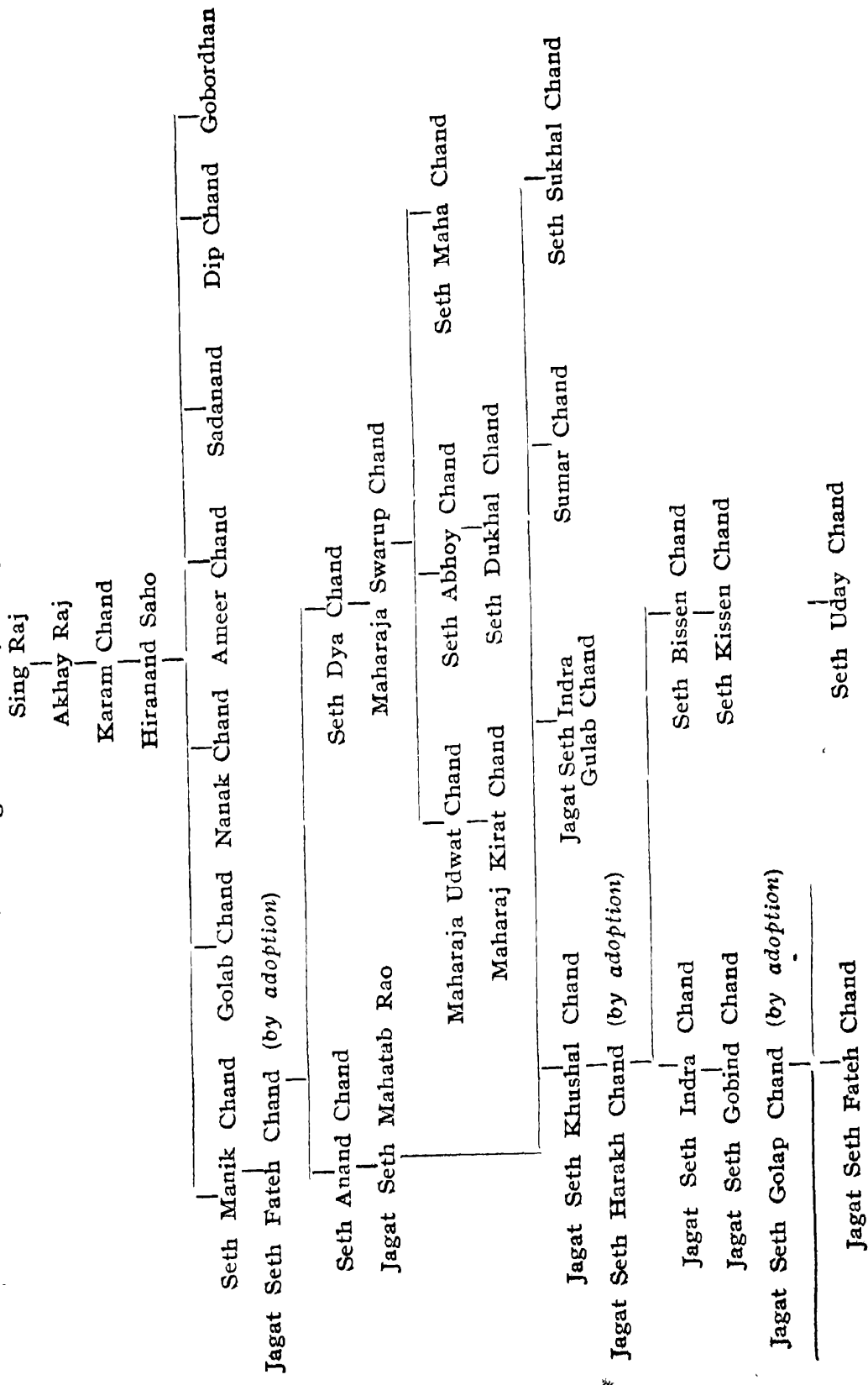
It was on this occasion that Jagat Seth Golab Chand presented the farman of the Emperor Farrukhsiyar, conferring the title of Seth on Fateh Chand, to the Victoria Memorial. Other distinguished visitors to the house of the Seths were Sir John Woodburn, the Lieutenant-Governor of Bengal, Lord Kitchener, who was then Commander-in-Chief in India and the members of the Historical Society of Calcutta.

Jagat Seth Golab Chand was succeeded by his eldest son Seth Feth Chand who is generally recognised by his fellow-countrymen as the 8th Jagat Seth. He lives a short distance away from the ancient home of his ancestors for when he was

a boy the great earthquake of 1896 hurled to the ground the part of the house that the scouring of the Bhagirathi had spared. His father then built the new house which he called "Jagat Seth's House." Blocks of brickwork which once formed part of the old house still strew the bank of the Bhagirathi. A few remnants of the old walls are still visible but the site is almost covered with jungle. A short distance down the river large blocks of masonry can again be seen—the ruins of the Jain temple built by Manik Chand when the family first came to Murshidabad. This temple was once adorned with finely covered columns and arches of touchstone<sup>7</sup>—fit stone for a banker's temple. These were rescued from the river's maw and are to form the chief adornment of a new Jain temple of which Jagat Seth Fateh Chand laid the foundation stone in 1913. Early in 1914 he proceeded to Ajmir to celebrate the marriage of his brother, Seth Udai Chand with the daughter of Seth Bridhimul Lorah, son of Dewan Bahadur Seth Umedmul Lorah of Ajmir. He was welcomed by the Oswals from all parts of Rajputana as their recognised head—indeed the family of Jagat Seth claims to be the recognised head of the Jain community in India. In his community the priests of Jagat Seth are honoured above other priests. He himself is the principal guest at their gatherings to whom they pay nazar and for whom they reserve the seal of honour or "masnad."

7. The blocks of touchstone were brought from Gour, the ancient capital of Bengal. No other temple made of touchstone is found in any part of India (Note by head of family).

APPENDIX I.  
*Genealogical Tree of the Jagat Selhs.*



## APPENDIX II.

*Translation of the Hindi Note-book preserved in the family with additions to the present day.*

Hirananda Saha was an inhabitant of Nagore. He left Nagore and came to Patna on the third day of the new moon of the month of Baisak in the Samvat year 1709. He died at Patna in the Samvat year 1768 on the fourth day of the full moon of the month of Magh. He had seven sons, Seth Manik Chand, Nanak Chand, Ameer Chand, Sadanand, Goberdhandas, and Dip Chand. He has also a daughter whom he gave in marriage to a son of Rai Udaichand.

Seth Manik Chand had two wives. He received the title of "Seth" from the Emperor Muhammad Farrakhsiyar on the 8th of Dilhaj in the third year of his reign. He died in the fourth year of the reign of this Emperor on the tenth day of the new moon of the month of Magh corresponding to the Samvat year 1771. He had no son so he adopted Fateh Chand a son of Rai Udai Chand in the Samvat year 1757. From this time the boy lived with Seth Manik Chand at Dacca. When Murshid Kuli Khan made Murshidabad the capital Manik Chand accompanied him and settled at Mahimapur in Murshidabad. When he died his remains were placed in the Manibag.

Jagat Seth Fateh Chand married a daughter of Rai Udai-chand of Agra. After succeeding Seth Manik Chand he obtained the title of "Seth" from the Emperor Farrakhsiyar in the fifth year of his reign at Delhi. In the fourth year of the reign of Muhammad Shah he was granted the title of "Jagat Seth." The reason why he received the title of Jagat Seth was this :— There was a great famine at Delhi and when the Emperor ordered him to bring relief and to take a duna (pan given to those present at the durbar as a mark of honour) he respectfully prayed that it might be publicly announced that hundis should be circulated freely. The Emperor agreed to his proposal and proclaimed that those who wanted money should write hundis and obtain money. So the famine disappeared and money was plentiful in the city. The Emperor was highly

pleased and conferred the title of Jagat Seth on Fateh Chand in return for his services. After that he returned to Murshidabad and died in the Samvat year 1801. His remains were placed in the Jagat Bisram. He had two sons Seth Anand Chand and Dya Chand. He had also two daughters.

Seth Anand Chand was born at Patna. He received the title of Seth from the Emperor Muhammad Shah in the fourth year of his reign. He died before his father. He had a son named Mahtab Rao.

Jagat Seth Mahtab Rao was confirmed in the title of Jagat Seth by the Emperor Ahmad Shah in the fourth year of his reign. He had four sons Khushal Chand, Gulabchand, Sumerchand and Sukhalchand. He had also one daughter. He was killed by Mir Kasim in the Samvat year 1820 on the tenth day of the full moon in the month of Aswin.

Seth Khushal Chand was born at Dacca on the fifth day of the new moon of the month of Bhadra in the Samvat year 1810. He was confirmed in the title of Seth by the Emperor Alamgir 11 in the Hijri year 1170. He was confirmed in the title of Jagat Seth by the Emperor Alamgir 11 in the sixth year of his reign. He died in the Hijri year 1196. He had a son named Gokalchand who was born in the Samvat year 1815 ; but he died in the presence of his father in the Samvat year 1836 at the age of 20. Seth Golabchand received the title of Seth from the Emperor Shah Alam in the Hijri year 1173 in the first year of his reign. He obtained the title of Jagat Indra in the Hijri year 1196. He died on the eighth day of the new moon of the month of Baisak in the Samvat 1853. He had no sons.

Seth Sumer Chand received the title of Seth from the Emperor Alamgir 11 on the 2nd Rabi-ul-Awal in the sixth year of his reign. He died on the second day of the new moon of the month of Bhadra in the Samvat year 1838.

Seth Sukhal Chand received the title of Seth from the Emperor Alamgir 11 in the sixth year of his reign.

Jagat Seth Harakh Chand was born on the third day of the new moon of the month of Magh in the Samvat year 1828. He married a daughter of Hukum Chand Mahanat of Azimganj. He died on the eighth day of the full moon of the month of Asar in the Samvat year 1870. He had two sons named Jagat Seth

Indra Chand and Seth Bissen Chand. Harakh Chand was confirmed in the title of Jagat Seth by the British Government during the administration of Governor-General Warren Hastings through Mubarak-ud-daula the Nawab Nazim of Bengal, Behar and Orissa who presented him with a seal containing the words "Jagat Seth" in the year 1784.

Jagat Seth Indra Chand was born in the Samvat year 1852. He married a daughter of Rai Sing Singhee. He died on the fourteenth day of the new moon of the month of Magh in the Samvat year 1879. He had only one son named Jagat Seth Gobind Chand. The mother of Jagat Seth Gobind Chand died on the third day of the month of Agrahan in the Samvat year 1916 that is the 12th December 1859.

Jagat Seth Gobind Chand was born on the tenth day of the full moon of the month of Aswin in the Samvat year 1867. He married a daughter of Harakh Chand Raka of Baluchar in the Samvat year 1882. He died on the 12th December 1864 at 4 A.M. He had no son. He adopted a boy named Gopal Chand. The British Government granted him a pension of Rs. 1,200 a month on the 1st July 1843 during the administration of Lord George Auckland.

Seth Bissen Chand was born on the eighth day of the full moon of the month of Falgoon, on Wednesday, in the Samvat year 1855. He received the title of Seth from Delar Jung the Nawab Nazim of Bengal, Behar and Orissa in the Hijri year 1221. He died at three in the morning on the eleventh day of the new moon of the Bhadra in Rangmehal Palace. He had only one son named Seth Kissen Chand.

Seth Kissen Chand was born on the third day of the month of Magh in the Samvat year 1873. He was granted the title of Seth by the British Government under Lord William Bentinck through Humayan Jah the Nawab Nazim of Bengal, Behar and Orissa on the third day of the full moon of the month of Magh in the Samvat year 1890. He received a pension of Rs. 800 after the death of Jagat Seth Gobind Chand. He died at Benares on the thirteenth day of the new moon of the month of Jaith in the Samvat year 1939. He had no son.

Maharaj Gopalchand was born on the fifth day of the new moon of the month of Aswin in the Samvat year 1896 and was adopted on the 23rd January 1845 A.D. He obtained the title



of Maharaj from the Emperor Bahadur Shah with a gold umbrella on the eleventh day of the new moon of the month of Falgoon in the Samvat year 1909. He died on the fifteenth August in 1862 A.D. at 9 P.M. He had two sons—the eldest died in his presence and the younger was named Gupichand. He was offered a pension of Rs. 300 which he thankfully declined.

Seth Dhokalchand received the title of Seth from the Calcutta Council on the 13th Agrahan 1228 Hijri. He had a son and a daughter whom he gave in marriage to the son of Harakhchand Sethia.

Gupichand was born on the 12th December 1878 A.D. on Friday. He died at the age of twelve in the presence of Jagat Seth Gobind Chand and Seth Kissen Chand.

Jagat Seth Golab Chand was born at Bikanir in Rajputana on the 29th November 1867. He was taken as an adopted son by the widow of Jagat Seth Gobind Chand on the third day of the new moon of the month of Baisakh in the Samvat year 1935. He married a daughter of Jaychand Baid in the Samvat year 1941. He had four sons of whom the youngest died in his presence. The eldest, Jagat Seth Fatch Chand, succeeded him. Lord Curzon paid a visit to the old and new houses of Jagat Seth on the 1st March, 1901, Sir John Wooburn on the 4th August, 1901 and Lord Kitchener on the 7th March, 1908. He was a staunch Jain. He died on the 7th April, 1912 at Calcutta.

Jagatsethani Pran Kumari, the wife of Jagat Seth Gobind Chand, died on the fourth day after the full moon of the month of Aswin at 3 in the morning in the Samvat year 1947. She was granted a pension of Rs. 300 by the British Government after the death of Seth Kissen Chand.

### APPENDIX 3.

A Copy of H. H. the Nawab Humayan Jah's Durbar List.  
(from Nizamat Records)

Left-hand side.

1 Nawab Solat Jang.

(grandson of Nawab Mujafar Jang—Naib-i-Nazim).

2. Seth Bissen Chand,  
(representative of Jagat Seth).
3. Diwan Raja Udmant Sing,  
(Diwan-i-Nizamat, Ancestor of the Maharaja of  
Nashipur).
4. Naib Diwan-i-Nizamat.
5. Mufit Muhammad Maizali Khan Saheb.
6. Maharaja Kirat Singha,  
(grandson of Maharaja Swarup Chand).
7. Seth Dhokalchand.
8. Raja Harnath Kumar,  
(of Cassimbazar).
9. Rai Girdhari Lall, (Diwan-i-Deory).
10. Rai Hari Sing,  
(Diwan-i-Deory Nawab Begum).
11. Rai Girdhari Lall,  
(Vakil-i-Nizamat, Calcutta).
12. Bijoy Kristo Rai,  
(son of Raja Mahanand, son of Raja Gurudass, son  
of Raja Nand Kumar).
13. Mahasaychandra Narayan Bangadhikari  
and others.

## APPENDIX 4.

A copy of H. H. the Nawab Feredun Jah's Durbar List.  
(from Nizamat Records).

Left-hand side.

1. The Hon'ble Mr. Tomson,  
(Agent of the Governor General at Murshidabad).
2. Maharaja of Ijanagar,  
(An independent chief).
3. Sir John Shore.
4. Jagat Seth Gobind Chand,  
(grandfather of present Jagat Seth).
5. Seth Kissen Chand,  
(representative of junior branch).

# APPENDIX 5.

EXTRACT OF THE FORT WILLIAM GENERAL CONSULTATIONS, DATED 29TH JANUARY 1772.

*Statement of the Debt due to Jugget Seet, showing how much of it has been [paid] to this day.*

To amount due to Jugget Seet, which was agreed to be paid him in the Space of 10 years in annual Payments of 105,000 each as follows:		
By the Nabab	1,050,000	
By the honourable Company	1,050,000	
	<hr/>	2,100,000
By Sundry Payments to the 19th of Poos, Bengal year 1178.		
From the Nabob	...	515,000-0
From the honourable Company	...	546,375-12
	<hr/>	1,061,375-12
By Balance due		
From the Nabob	535,000-0	
From the honourable Company	503,624-4	
	<hr/>	1,038,624-4
N.B.—Of the above Balance there is due from the Nabob.		2,100,000
To the end of the present year 1178		115,000-0
From the Beginning of 1179 to the end of 1182.		420,000-0
<hr/>		535,000-0
From the honourable Company to the end of the present Bengal year 1178.		83,624-4
From the Beginning of the Bengal year 1179 to the end of 1182.		420,000-0
<hr/>		1,033,624-4
Compared, as far as regards the Company's Proportion, with the Books in the Accountant's Office.		
Charles Croftes, Accountant.		
Errors Excepted		

*Moorsshedabad, the 31st. December 1771.*

## APPENDIX 6.

*In the Name of the Holy and the Exalted (God).*

Mohammad Jahan Shah Bahadur Badshah Ghazi, son of Saheb Qiran II Abdul Fath Nasiruddin, son of Shah Alam, son of Alamgir, son of Shah Jahan, son of Jahangir, son of Akbar, son of Humayun, son of Babar, son of Omar Sheikh Shah, son of Abu Syud Shah, son of Sultan Mohammad Shah, son of Miron Shah, son of Amir Taimur Saheb Qiran. 1133 Hijiri.

Farman of Mohammad Nasiruddin Abul Fath, Badshah-i-Ghazi.

At this time near unto victory and closely allied to happiness, the world obeyed command of sunny lustre receives the honour of issue that from the Court of Eternal Sovereignty, Seth Fatah Chand,—with the award of the title of Jagat Seth as hereditary distinction and the bestowal of magnificent robes of honour, an elephant and a pearl ear-ring,—and his son, Anand Chand,—with the title of Seth as hereditary distinction and the gift of robes of honour and a pearl ear-ring,—have hoarded the treasure of trust and dignity. It is proper that the civil and ministerial officers, and all the pen-men of the present and the future living within the aforesaid Protected Territories should write Jagat Seth Fatah Chand as also designate his son Seth Anand Chand. They should deem this imperative from the side of His Glorious Majesty. Written on the 12th Rajab, in the 4th year of the Exalted Reign.

## APPENDIX 7.

Translatoin of a Persian letter from the Governor-General Warren Hastings to Mobarak-ud-Daula Bahadur Nawab Nazim of Bengal, Behar and Orissa. In the year 1784.

Nawab Shah of Exalted rank and dignity admirer of the brethren may be safe and sound.

After expressing my earnest desire for a happy interview with you which cannot be described in writing, I bring to your kind notice that a robe of honour consisting of six pieces, an

ornament that is worn in turban, a turban set with jewels, a necklace of pearls, an ear-ring with pearls and a palanquin with frills have been sent by me through Sir John Sahib, to the kind gentleman Seth Hurrack Chand Saheb.

I hope your nobleself will be pleased to confer on the said Sett the title Jagat Seth to give him seal and to allow him the privilege of being looked upon with esteem and respect as his family has been for a long time.

(Sd.) Warren Hastings.

#### APPENDIX 8.

Government of Bengal, Political Department.

From—The Hon'ble Mr. J. H. Kerr, C.I.E., I.C.S.,  
Offg. Chief Secretary to the Government of Bengal.

To—The Commissioner of the Presidency Division.

Calcutta, the 17th January, 1916.

Sir,

I am directed to refer to the correspondence ending with your letter No. 429 J. P., dated the 27th November, 1915, regarding the correct method of addressing Fateh Chand of the Jagat Seth Family in the district of Murshidabad.

2. In reply, I am to say that the Governor-in-Council is pleased to recognise the long standing practice of his family and accordingly to direct that he should, in future, be addressed in official correspondence as "Jagat Seth Fateh Chand" without the prefix "Babu." I am to request that he may be informed accordingly, etc.

I have, etc.,

(Sd.) A. CASSELLS,

For, Offg. Chief Secy. to the Govt. of Bengal.

---

## MEMO. NO. 24J.P.

Commissioner Office, Presidency Division.

Dated, Calcutta, the 24th January, 1916.

Copy forwarded to the Magistrate of Murshidabad for information with reference to his letter No. 2960, dated 3rd November, 1915, for communication to Jagat Seth Fateh Chand.

Personal Assistant to Commissioner.

By order

(Sd.) A. ISLAM,

21-1.

## MEMO NO. 24 J.G.

Dated the 24th January, 1916, from the Commissioner of the Presidency Division.

## MEMO. NO. 5510 G.

Murshidabad, Collectorate,

Dated Berhampore, the 4th February, 1916.

Copy together with a copy of the enclosure forwarded to Jagat Seth Fateh Chand for information.

(Sd.) M. Bing.

For Collector

4-2-16.

## APPENDIX 9.

Thacker's Directory, 1865.

Mufussil, p. 204.

Murshidabad, in Bengal.

Native Residents.

- I. H. H. Munsoorally Khan Feredoon Jah,  
Nawab Nazim of Bengal,  
At Murshidabad.
- II. Nawab Sufderally Khan Bahadur.
- III. Nawab Syed Zuffurally Khan Bahadur.
- IV. Nawab Azimally Khan Bahadur.
- V. Jagat Seth Gobind Chand,  
(Grandfather of the present "Jagat Seth").
- VI. Rajah Ketter Chand, (Nashipur).
- VII. Rajkissen Roy, (Cassimbazar).
- VIII. Ranee Shymasundary.

Supplied  
for the Public  
Service.

Home Dept.  
the Govt. of India.

Thacker's Directory  
for  
Bengal, N. W. Province.  
Almanac.

p.p. 165.

Calcutta  
Home-Dept.  
Library.

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